

Norbert MBU-MPUTU



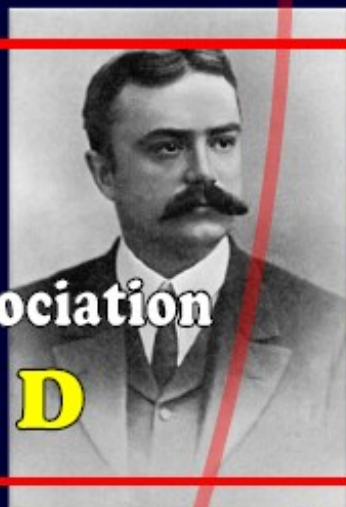
Victory over the Leopold II Genocide

Edmund MOREL

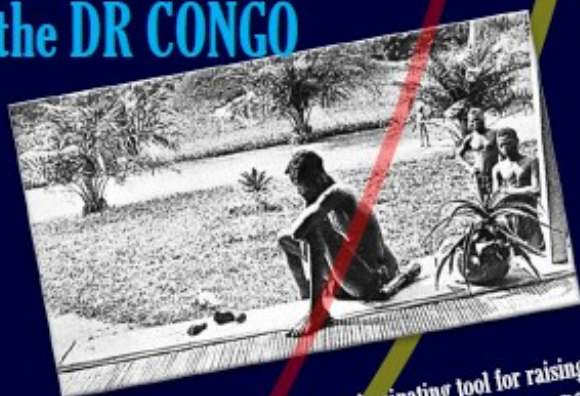
And

The Congo Reform Association

REVISITED



A Brief History of the DR CONGO



'A masterpiece of research... A fascinating tool for raising awareness about the still unfolding HOLOCAUST in the DRC...'
Guy Njali Bola, Okapi African Magazine



EDMUND DENE MOREL (1873-1924)

&

THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION (1904-1913)

REVISITED

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The Congo Reform Association (1904-1913)

REVISITED

Victory over the Leopold II Genocide

Brief British Isles/UK & the DRC Shared History

2nd Edition, Revised, Corrected, and Enlarged

Edited by Norbert MBU-MPUTU



Bristol, 2025

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This book is the most important outcome of the project

**“BO’ BISO: CONGO/UK COMMON HISTORY TASK
FORCE REVISITED EDMOND MOREL AND THE
CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION”**

By

SOUTH PEOPLE’S PROJECTS-SOPPRO

And sponsored by

HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

which we warmly thank for its past, present, and likely future
sponsorships of our organisation’s projects and activities.

We dedicate this book to:

The late **Honoré NGBANDA Nzambo-ko-Atumba**, who
was the first to raise his voice and open our eyes,
Patrick MBEKO, who refuses to remain silent and usually
finds answers to unanswered questions,
Charles ONANA for his insightful analyses and all the se-
cret documents he has revealed,
Boniface MUSAVULI, who never shuts up about what he
and those around him have seen and heard since this
ongoing tragedy began, and finally to
Michela WRONG for her courageous testimony, as only
an Iron Lady can.

To all of you, DR Congo's new whistleblowers in the
footsteps of Edmund Morel, we dedicate this invocative
landing to our Congolese proxy wars, waged by one of our
wise patriarchs, whom fate has since chosen to precede us,
to where we will all end up going without coming back, as
he used to write:

*“3.000.000 de Morts réclament justice - Bifuku bisato bya bawei
basengi lisambisi - Maiti milioni tatu za Wakongomani zi-
naomba Kisasi - Three million dead claim justice”.*

(**Thomas d'Aquin KAWATA Ashem Tem**).

“History will one day have its say, but it will not be the history taught at the United Nations, Washington, Paris, or Brussels, but the history taught in countries freed from colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its history, and it will be a history of glory and dignity both north and south of the Sahara.”

(Patrice LUMUMBA’s last letter to his wife, Pauline).

“*DR LIVINGSTONE, I presume?*” One of the most famous quotations in the history of the world, but its back story begins in St Asaph’s workhouse. Henry Morton Stanley, star journalist of the late 19th Century, had humble origins as poor John Rowlands, an illegitimate child born in north Wales. But the extraordinary trajectory of his life led him ultimately to the shores of Lake Tanganyika and the meeting with Livingstone that changed the history of exploration. (...) Pastor William Hughes of Colwyn Bay was an early proponent of Pan-Africanism as well as modern fundraising methods: he set up The Congo and Africa Institute of Wales (...). Later, another Welshman, Edmund Morel, set up the Congo Reform Association, which was essentially a human rights movement, and his 1909 campaign at the Royal Albert Hall is seen as the beginning of the end of King Leopold’s reign.”

(Dylan MOORE, “Wales and Congo: new beginnings” in Waleshome, February 22, 2011)

“I do not wish to paint the present in roseate hues. The wounds of the Congo will take generations to heal”.

(Edmund Dene MOREL)

Table of Contents

MAPS

THE DRC's 26 PROVINCES	12
DRC's 4 NATIONAL LANGUAGES MAP	12
GOOGLE MAP: BRITISH ISLES/DR CONGO SHARED HISTORY SITES	13
DR CONGO'S FIRST MAP BY H. M. STANLEY	14

INTRODUCTION 15

"Bo' Biso": BRITISH ISLES/UK-DR CONGO TASKFORCE	16
INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITIES' RECOGNITIONS	17
THE SAME CAUSES PRODUCE THE SAME EFFECTS...	21
EVERYTHING PASSES AWAY, EXCEPT THE PAST.	21
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	23
FINALLY	24

CHAP I. ONCE UPON A TIME... TO BRIDGE THE GAPS 25

THE NEO/POST-COLONIAL NARRATIVE DIVIDE	25
HISTORICAL MISTAKE: COLONIAL BORDERS...	28
60 BRITISH ISLES/UK-DRC SHARED HISTORY SITES & PLAQUES	29

OFFICIAL ACT OF CONGO'S ACCESSION TO INDEPENDENCE 32

CHAP II. THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO HISTORY

MILESTONES: INTERVIEW WITH MBU-MPUTU 33

THE DRC BEFORE CONTACT WITH EUROPE: ETHNIC GROUPS, TRIBES, LANGUAGES, CULTURES AND TRADITIONS	34
The pygmies (Batwa)	41

“KINDOKI”/WITCHCRAFT: A POWER, A KNOWLEDGE AND AN IDEOLOGY WHICH IS A	
FOUNDATION OF AN ETHIC	46
Twin’s Ritual	49
‘Bilima’: impersonal spirits and forces of nature	53
Sacredness and modesty	57
CONGOLESE RUMBA MUSIC AND DANCE	59
CONGOLESE REGIONAL LANGUAGES: LINGALA, KIKONGO, KISWAHILI AND KI(TSHI)LUBA	68
THE RISE OF LINGALA	70
FIRST CONGO CONTACT WITH THE WEST: THE SLAVE TRADE	71
NEW AFRICAN EXPLORATIONS: LIVINGSTONE AND STANLEY	80
H. M. STANLEY IN THE CONGO, WORKING FOR LEOPOLD II.	88
BERLIN CONFERENCE: LEOPOLD II AND THE CONGO FREE STATE	100
CONGO LEOPOLD II’S RED RUBBER EXPLOITATION	102
In Koli Jean Bofane’s ‘Cong Inc.’ (extract)	105
GEORGE WASHINGTON WILLIAMS (1849-1891): THE PIONEER	110
EDMUND DENE MOREL AND THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION	112
FROM THE CONGO FREE STATE TO THE BELGIAN CONGO	124
CONGO, A WWI AND WWII ALLY, AND THE COLD WAR LATER	129
COLONIALISM IS UNDER SCRUTINY.	136
DECOLONISATION: UPHEAVALS, DECOYS AND GLIMMERS OF LIGHT	139
Some research centres and famous missionaries	148
CONGO INDEPENDENCE: THURSDAY, 30 JUNE 1960	160
1960: African independent countries and their presidents..	160
AMBROISE BOIMBO: SOME OF ROBERT LEBECK’S	165
MASTERPIECES PICTURES – LEOPOLDVILLE, 29 JUNE 1960	165
LUMUMBA’S ASSASSINATION: USA, BELGIUM, UK, THE UN...	172

IRELAND AND DR CONGO'S SHARED HISTORY	193
THE UK IN THE CONGOLESE CRISIS...	196
ANDRÉE BLOUIN: AN IRON LADY BEFORE HER TIME	199
AFRICA: 1970S-1980S AND MOBUTU'S MPR "PARTI-ÉTAT"	204
THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL, THE END OF THE COLD WAR	217
NELSON MANDELA'S YEARS	220
THE RWANDESE GENOCIDE...	227
DECOLONISATION'S PITFALLS: HAITI VS FRANCE, BELGIUM VS DRC	235
CONTEMPORARY D. R. CONGO: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES	239
PATRICE LUMUMBA'S 30 TH JUNE 1960 SPEECH	245
PATRICE LUMUMBA'S LAST LETTER TO HIS WIFE, PAULINE	247
QUOTES	249
Treaty of Cession of the Congo Free State to Belgium	251
H. M. STANLEY ENTERS THE SERVICE OF KING LEOPOLD II...	252
H.M. STANLEY BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE	253
H. M. STANLEY: MORE HERO THAN COLONIALIST BRUTE	254
CHAP III. H. M. STANLEY: THE GREATEST EXPLORER OF AFRICA AND CONGO. INTERVIEW WITH TIM JEAL	255
"DR. LIVINGSTONE, I PRESUME?"	265
THE AFRICAN EXPLORERS: BOMBAY AFRICANS	266
CHAP IV. REV HUGHES, THE CONGO BOYS, THE CONGO & AFRICAN INSTITUTE (1891-1912) AND BEYOND. INTERVIEW WITH NORBERT MBU-MPUTU	267
CHAP V. REV. WILLIAM HUGHES, MY GREAT GRANDFATHER: INTERVIEW WITH JAN WILLIAMS	287

CHAP VI. EDMUND DENE MOREL AND THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION:	
INTERVIEW WITH COLINS THOMAS	289
RED RUBBER: BOTOFE – MAPULE – MAPUYE	298
CHAP VII. THE CONGO JOURNEY IN FOOTSTEPS OF H. M. STANLEY:	
INTERVIEW WITH TIM BUTCHER	299
Some pictures of Leopold II's Congo atrocities	304
CHAP VIII. HENRY MORTON STANLEY: AN ADVENTURER AND A LUCKY SELF-MADE MAN. INTERVIEW WITH NORBERT MBU-MPUTU	305
CHAP IX. "POSSESSION" - ANTI-LEOPOLD II PLAY PORTRAYING HARRIS SEELEY. INTERVIEW WITH OSCAR PEARCE	312
CHAP X. <i>MISSION IMPOSSIBLE? TAKING CHRISTIANITY TO THE CONGO</i> BY REGINALD HALL. INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR BY NORBERT MBU-MPUTU.	315
CHAP XI. AND NOW... FROM RED RUBBER TO RED COLTAN: THE ONGOING CONGO OMERTA...	323
THE SAME CAUSES LEAD TO THE SAME EFFECTS	323
BLOOD RUBBER TO BLOOD COLTAN VIA BLOOD URANIUM	324
OMERTA	325
RWANDA EXPORTS COLTAN WORTH USD 240 MILLION.	327
THE USUAL CASUS BELLI: "BANYAMULENGE" AND "FDLR"	328
ALLEGED RWANDAN LANDS PLUNDERED BY THE DR CONGO.	330
GENOCIDE... THE SIX-DAY WAR IN KISANGANI	332
UNDER THE SHADOW OF LEOPOLD II	332
GENO-COST	333
THE ONGOING CONGOLESE WARS: GENOCIDE OR HOLOCAUST?	335

CONCLUSION	337
MEMORIES: TOMORROW'S CONGOLESE GENOCIDE	338
BEYOND JOSEPH CONRAD'S HEART OF DARKNESS	338
IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF EDMUND DENE MOREL	339
DR CONGO: LEOPOLD II EXORCISM, STILL A LONG WAY OFF	340
BEYOND THE UNFORTUNATE HISTORY	340
CONGO NOW: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES	342
NEW LEADERSHIP	343
"CAUSA SUBLATA, TOLLITUR EFFECTUS" ...	344
FINALLY... PEOPLE OF THE DR CONGO	345
DR CONGO: MORE PART OF THE SOLUTION THAN OF THE PROBLEM	346
APPENDICES	347
BLACK ACHIEVERS HALL: LIVERPOOL SLAVERY MUSEUM	347
JEAN-JACQUES MBONDO: WWI CONGOLESE SOLDIER BURIED IN THE UK	348
BRITISH ISLES & DR CONGO SHARED HISTORY SITES	350
Scotland.....	350
Northern Ireland.....	351
The Republic of Ireland	352
Wales.....	353
England	355
BIBLIOGRAPHY	367
INDEX	373



The DRC's 26 Provinces



DRC's 4 National Languages Map



Google Map: British Isles/DR Congo Shared History



- 1 Aberdeen
- 2 Dundee
- 3 Glasgow
- 4 Blantyre
- 5 Dregthorn
- 6 Edinburgh
- 7 Magherintemple
- 8 Belfast
- 9 Dublin
- 10 Bangor (University)
- 11 Colwyn Bay
- 12 Rhoslan
- 13 Llanellian
- 14 Caernarfon
- 15 St Asaph
- 16 Brynford

- 17 Hawarden
- 18 Llangollen
- 19 Denbigh
- 20 Aberhosan
- 21 Llansteffan
- 22 Swansea
- 23 Cardiff
- 24 Liverpool
- 25 Port Sunlight
- 26 Blackpool
- 27 Bradford
- 28 Bolton
- 29 Manchester
- 30 Birmingham
- 31 Nottingham
- 32 Pitsford

- 33 Oxford
- 34 Bristol
- 35 Bath
- 36 Sancreed
- 37 Neston Park
- 38 Buckland Brewer
- 39 Torquay
- 40 Frome
- 41 Dowlish Wake
- 42 Radipole
- 43 Southampton
- 44 Leighton Buzzard
- 45 LONDON
- 46 Shoreham
- 47 Strood
- 48 Canterbury

- 49 Pirthbright
- 50 Brookwood
- 51 Horsham
- 52 Crowborough
- 53 Dover
- 54 Bishopsbourne
- 55 Birtley
- 56 Brandesburton
- 57 Sudbury
- 58 Sandhurst
- 59 Ashbourne
- 60 Clacton-on-Sea

A click on the link and the icons give access to the attached documents, texts, & audiovisual files:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=17PdvNTVFVZJGisUznCXBZyhwrX2XI5U&usp=sharing>

DR CONGO'S FIRST MAP BY H. M. STANLEY



The map that H. M. Stanley designed between 1874 and 1877 and was the first map of the Congo, a historic document held by the Stanley family since he died in 1904: the heart of Africa, empty, on an ochre and sand-coloured map and the curve of the Congo River annotated in Stanley pencil with dates, rapids crossed and battles fought. It was bought on September 24, 2002, in London for £ 65,000 (104,000 euros) by a private collector who also bought two Stanley's albums of photographs taken during his three expeditions across Africa between 1871 and 1882, for 88,000 euros.

Introduction

AT FIRST GLANCE, the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the former **Zaire**, has, historically, nothing in common with the **United Kingdom** and, by extension, the **British Isles**. Even if the first—independent on Thursday, June 30, 1960, a former Belgian colony called the **Belgian Congo** (1908-1960) and, long before that, the **Congo Free State** (1885-1908), which the Belgian King Leopold II granted himself by cunningly outmanoeuvring all the protagonists of the Berlin scramble for Africa Conference (1884-1885)¹—was not part of the British Empire. However, research and **South People's Projects—SoPPro's** previous Democratic Republic of the Congo/United Kingdom shared history projects demonstrated to everyone's surprise that, a century ago, some Victorian Brits lived and worked in Congo; most of them, Protestant missionaries, positively impacted Congolese history, dedicated their lives to the Congolese people, and some even died in Congo. Unfortunately, most of them are barely known, quoted, or even taught in the Congo, a consequence of the post-colonial narrative divide², and the UK. **Edmund Dene Morel** is one of them.

The “**Bo' Biso**” project was conceived and carried out to rectify this situation, to correct this narrative injustice and to bridge this historical divide, starting with one of the characters in the shared history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Kingdom: **Edmund Dene Morel** and his founded organisation the Congo Reform Association.

¹ On November 25, 1878, Leopold II created the “*Comité d'Etudes du Haut-Congo*,” which signed Henry Morton Stanley, and sponsored his Congo expedition (1878-1884), renamed it on November 17, 1879, “*L'Association Internationale du Congo*” (AIC), and as the Berlin Conference (November 15, 1884- February 26, 1885) acknowledged his AIC's ownership, he signed a decree and on May 29, 1885, formalising the ‘*Independent State of Congo*’ proclaimed in Vivi, its first capital, on 1st February 1885 by its first Administrator General, the British Sir Francis Walter de Winton, he appointed in 1884 replacing H. M. Stanley, with whom de Winton proceeded the handover.

² Chapter One of this book explains what we mean by “*the neo/postcolonial narrative divide*”.

“Bo’ Bisó”: British Isles/UK-DR Congo Taskforce

South People’s Projects—SoPPro received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant from funds raised by National Lottery players for its project, **“Bo’ Bisó: The Congo/UK Common History Task Force Revisiting Morel and The Congo Reform Association,”** which aimed to explore Morel and his legacy, the **Congo Reform Association (CRA)**, the first twentieth-century human rights pioneer movement. The project revisited, taught, and retold Morel’s history, identified his resting place in the London borough of Barnet’s Golders Green Crematorium, and visited both his living village of Hawarden in North Wales and the city of Liverpool, where he launched his CRA.

Additionally, the project aimed to identify the DRC—British Isles/United Kingdom shared history champions so that they could be celebrated and their legacies known: the project searched, found, pointed out, and bounded the known and less-known venues, sites, birth, living, death, resting, and burial places on a designed, printed, and online geo-locatable and downloadable sites map, edited the project handbook and this end of the project one, and additionally, it printed out special **gold plaques** commemorating this shared history to be displayed at each identified and mapped site to be celebrated and honoured. And, based in the London borough of Newham, the project **“Bo’ Bisó”** bought, collected, and received donations of materials, books, and artefacts to be displayed at the project exhibition and finally transferred to the **Congo Cultural Centre** project in progress, led by the new plenipotentiary DRC ambassador in London, **Professor Ndolamb Ngokwey**.

This book, the main outcome of the “Bo’ Bisó” project, contains interviews, articles and other contributions that focus not only on Morel, the protagonist of both the book and the project, and his Congo Reform Association, but also on other well-known figures and lesser-known places that contribute to such a rich common history between the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Kingdom and the entire British Isles. Undoubtedly, readers and the curious will find short stories to learn from, a legacy to teach from, and more than that: role models and characters.

This **“Bo’ Bisó”** project follows on from SoPPro’s previous shared history projects between the UK and the DRC, notably:

1. **In the footsteps of Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904), the greatest Western explorer of Africa and the DRC.**

Despite his humble origins, born John Rowlands in Wales, Stanley rose to prominence as a renowned journalist and explorer, succeeding where others had failed, including in his encounter with Dr Livingstone, famously commemorated by Stanley's symbolic greeting: "*Dr Livingstone, I presume?*", and his crossing of Africa from east to west and from west to east and solving once and for all the source of the Nile problem, circumnavigation of the Congo River from source to mouth, design of the first DR Congo map, statement that "*without the railway, the Congo isn't worth a penny*", and also his first DRC designed flag, from which the current one is derived, etc.

2. **Revisiting the Remarkable Welsh Rev. Hughes, the Congo Boys, and the Congo-Africa Institute (Wales: Colwyn Bay 1889-1912).**

Fortunately, assisted by an old lady, we made a major contribution in fortuitously discovering the graves of Rev. Hughes and his Congo Boys, then unvisited and almost lost in Old Colwyn Cemetery.

Institutions and communities' recognitions

And, as a confluence of research, confrontation, source analysis, document reading, museum visits, extensive fieldwork, and connections with similar projects, communities and several history, academic and research corporations and official institutions, the Congolese Embassy and government included, all of them praised, supported and warmly welcome these British Isles/UK and the DRC shared history projects outcomes, including this "Bo' Bis'o' one, from now part of communities and nations cultural heritage.

Led at the time by the *Chargée d'Affaires*, **Mrs Marie-Thérèse Kafenge**, the London DRC Embassy praised the outcomes of our shared history projects and officially paid tribute to Welsh towns and cities we found to be historically connected to the DRC. She led her delegation on a visit and was welcomed by the local authorities in H. M. Stanley's birthplace, Denbigh, Colwyn Bay, where Rev. Hughes established his Congo/African Institute, the University of Bangor, which houses the Congo Institute's archives, and finally, the capital of Wales, Cardiff. To strengthen grassroots connections, she also sponsored around a hundred Congolese people in the UK to attend the Denbigh festival. Furthermore, after funding the restoration of

the graves of Congo Boys Reverend Hughes brought in and died in the UK, she also sponsored their first ever commemoration celebration of that kind in Colwyn Bay, which began with an African libation ceremony in the cemetery, attended by a crowd of Congolese people, including the London-based Kimbanguist brass band performance, as well as Colwyn Bay's residents³.

And, upon his arrival as the UK Ambassador of the DRC, Professor **Ndolamb Ngokwey** acknowledged the projects and highlighted how it is important to popularise the legacy (resources, publications, stories) of the lesser-known shared history between the DRC and the British Isles to be used as a soft-power tool. Given his obvious interest in and support for diaspora cultural projects, he was particularly honoured to be the first African diplomat in the UK invited to officially launch the innovative **'Wales 365 Black History'** in Cardiff. Instead of the usual Black History Month in October, Wales will celebrate the contributions of black people to world history throughout the entire year and integrate those stories into school and academic programmes. During the event, he also raised the profile of the DRC by sponsoring the UK Congolese rumba band Kasaï Masay, who brought joy to the occasion.

Academics' quotes, scientists' columns, researchers' press releases, interviews, audiovisual coverage, and communities and local authorities everywhere warmly and enthusiastically praised these shared history projects, 'Bo' Bisso' being the last. Most even suggested new topics that they would like us to explore.

These projects have had, and continue to have, international recognition, as exemplified by Sanaz Azari's decision to involve SoPPro coordinator Norbert Mbu-Mputu and secretary Deo Katya Kasereka in his film documentary "[*Tout passe*] *Sauf le passé*" about the Tervuren Royal Museum for Central Africa. Norbert also contributed to several research studies, books, and projects, including the Bangor University/Colwyn Bay and Aberystwyth Wales Museum and Library, respectively, projects "*Re-Imagining Congo House/African Institute*" and "*Wales Biography*," several conferences, and he was honoured to write the postscript for the book

³ According to one speaker, *Kimbanguism*, founded by the prophet Simon Kimbangu in Nkamba (not far from Vunda, where Hughes lived), was inspired by Hughes as, upon returning, founded his own independent church in Colwyn Bay, the Tabernacle, after disagreeing with his Baptist church.

'Mission. Impossible? Taking Christianity to the Congo' by Reginald Hall, nicknamed 'Kongo' in his native Congolese village, where his parents were Christian pioneer missionaries in the region. Finally, this special acknowledgement from the academic Robert Burroughs:

"Connections between Africa and Wales, past and present, have also been forged through the work of Norbert X. Mbu-Mputu. (...) Having previously visited this European capital as part of a successful career, which included work for the United Nations, he found himself homeless [in London]. Eventually, immigration services relocated him to Wales, where he continued his career as a journalist, activist, researcher, and charity worker. Serendipitously, the move to Wales provided Mbu-Mputu with a connection to

his homeland (...), a connection which enables him to pursue extraordinary knowledge of their [the first recruits to Congo House: Nkanza and Kinkasa] lives. Working between Britain and Africa, he has investigated the historic links between Wales and Congo. On a journey to Colwyn Bay, he spoke to the locals, found the graves of the African students, and learned of their stories. With



Mrs Marie-Therese Kafenge, DRC London Embassy Chargeé d'Affaires and her team visiting Denbigh (Statue of Stanley)



Cardiff: DRC Ambassador in the UK, His Excellency Prof. Ngokwey Ndolamb and the former Welsh First Minister Right Hon. Vaughan Gething, AM.

support from the *Heritage Lottery Fund*, Mbu-Mputu led a project to help young people in South Wales explore the shared heritage of Congolese and Welsh communities. One outcome of this work was his book *Bamonimambo (the Witnesses): Rediscovering Congo and British Isles Common History* (2012)⁴, which draws upon oral sources to further document Congo House and its students. At each turn⁵, Mbu-Mputu's work has forged opportunities for sharing and understanding across the divides of community, race, age, and language. With support from community historians, he has been involved in a visit by a delegation from the Democratic Republic of the Congo's UK Embassy to Colwyn Bay and to Bangor University, where the largest archival holding for Congo House is kept. These encounters inspired another delegation from the same embassy to travel to Colwyn Bay for a day of celebration, in which the graves of the Congo boys were reconsecrated⁶. Moving amateur footage⁷ of this event is available on YouTube. For much of the 2010s, local historians continued to recover the history of Congo House as part of an African Institute Research Group. Their work continues in much the same spirit established by Mbu-Mputu: seeking to connect communities across continents through shared history"⁸.

⁴ 'Building Bridges', Croeso I Gymru, BBC Wales <http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/audiovideo/sites/yourvideo/pages/norb-ertx_mbumputu_01.shtml> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2020].

⁵ 'Young Africans Explore Congo Roots', BBC Local: South East Wales <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/south-east-wales/hi/people_and_places/arts_and_culture/newsid_8234000/8234119.stm> [Accessed 18 Dec. 2020].

⁶ 'Town Council Welcomes Congolese Delegation', Bay of Colwyn: Town Council <<https://www.colwyn-tc.gov.uk/town-council-welcomes-congolese-delegation/>>; <https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/local-news/bangor-universitys-historic-congo-link-11569154>. > [accessed 18 Dec. 2020].

⁷ 'Minutes of a Meeting of the Bay of Colwyn Town Council [...] on Monday 17th October 2016' <<https://www.colwyn-tc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/MIN-Council-17.10.16.pdf>>; Black History Month North Wales <<http://www.bhm-nw.com/index.asp?pageid=580958>>; '19 11 16 Return of the Congolese', YouTube <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dph-4jBhQIzXo>> [Accessed 18 Dec 2020].

⁸ Burroughs, R., *Black Students in Imperial Britain...*, https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/258/oa_edited_volume/chapter/3265879 [Accessed 28 May 2023].

The same causes produce the same effects...

Here's another episode of that shared history that is not often told: Edmund Morel and his CRA, which won the victory against Leopold II's Congo rubber genocide, which caused 10 million deaths. Once again, history is repeating itself: as with rubber, which benefited Leopold II rather than the Congolese, the current surge in smartphones and laptops uses coltan, a mineral of which the DRC is a major producer. Astonishingly, Congo's eastern neighbours, mainly Kagame's Rwanda, export coltan and other minerals from Congo, even though there is none in their soil. The multinational buyers who know it hypocritically apply the *omertà* instead. Alas!

Everything passes away, except the past⁹.

The past is a whole school, life, and even a priesthood. It is not an easy undertaking, for the history of mankind is made up of ups and downs, clashes and glimmers, heroes and even “*zeheroes*,”¹⁰ to say the negative heroes, noble deeds to be perpetuated, and negativities to be consigned to the dustbin, and about which contemporaries are reluctant to revisit. We witness historic seasonal battles, discover new facts, recall forgotten stories, celebrate heroes, mummify raised hands, and flash a wink with a camera click. In short, history is an episodic journey anchored in the common trunk of universal history. Water continues to flow beneath the historic bridge; only history, talks, projects, and objects help to root it. Therefore, those voices currently advocating for the return of African art, artefacts and archives that Westerners stole, took maliciously or by force since the slave trade and colonisation, and held in museums and by private collectors. And so, following Haiti¹¹, which is in talks to

⁹ Tervuren Museum entrance features this motto; the designer was probably inspired by Master Socrates, who adopted the “know thyself” maxim inscribed upon the Delphi Temple of Apollo.

¹⁰ Williams Sassine, a novelist from Guinea-Conakry, coined the neologism “*zéheros*” for “negative heroes” in his “*Les Zéheros n'est pas n'importe qui*” (The *Zéheros* is not just anyone), Présence Africaine, 1985.

¹¹ Led by its first president, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, a disciple of the Haitian freedom fighter Toussaint Louverture, a black slave who organised the first armed uprising and defeated France but was arrested, jailed and died in France, Haiti became, in history, the first black republic independent of France on January 1st, 1804.

recover the original of its ‘Act of Independence’ from the British National Archives, the Democratic Republic of the Congo can also recover its archives that Belgium holds, such as:

1. Leopold II’s “*Traité de cession*” (Transfer Agreement) of the Congo Free State to Belgium¹².
2. DRC archives taken in Belgium by F. Vandewalle.¹³
3. The original of the DRC’s *Act of Independence*¹⁴.
4. The record and cover of the song ‘*Indépendance cha cha*’ with autographs from African Jazz musicians and a handwritten page of the song’s original lyrics, a certain Mr. Philippe Pierret found and posted online¹⁵.
5. The original of the Congolese first Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba’s 30 June 1960 speech¹⁶.

¹² <https://arch.arch.be/index.php?l=fr&m=actualites&r=toutes-les-actualites&a=2021-03-04-traite-de-cession-de-l-etat-independant-du-congo-a-la-belgique>; <https://mondafrique.com/le-traite-de-1907-cedant-le-congo-a-la-belgique-recupere-dernierement-dans-une-salle-de-vente/> [Accessed on 4 Dec. 2023]. The Belgian Archives, at rue du Houblon, 26 Brussels, houses two signed copies: one with the Belgian colours’ ribbons, and the other have the Congo Free State’s ones.

¹³ After Lumumba dismissed him as the Sûreté Nationale’s administrator in September 1960 and replaced him with Christophe Muzungu, Victor Nendaka’s predecessor, Belgian Colonel Vandewalle collected and sent the Congo archives to Brussels via Boma and the USA.

¹⁴ Signed on 30 June 1960 by the Belgian and Congolese prime ministers, Gaston Eyskens and Patrice Lumumba, and countersigned by foreign affairs ministers, Pierre Vigny and Justin Bomboko, the deed, *a sentence of 21 words in three lines typed on a A4 paper bearing no official mark, no administrative sign, no State symbol, no Congo and Belgium seals, no official heading with the States mottos, and no coats of arms*. It only displays signatures, the capital, the date, and Eyskens’s elephantine signature on the Congo’s birth certificate, leaving no space for Lumumba’s, was a last gesture of pride by a colonist furious to lose the Congo and no doubt because of Lumumba’s undiplomatic speech. Astonishingly, the late Professor Lumenganeso, former DRC’s Archives Chief Curator, stated that: “*We do not have the original act of the Congolese and Belgian governments consecrating the independence of the Congo*”, a real danger, as someone could challenge Congo’s independence (Lumenganeso, A. K., « Grands Témoins », Radio Okapi, 9/8/2007).

¹⁵ <https://www.mbokamosika.com/article-les-auteurs-de-la-chanson-independance-cha-cha-bien-identifies-118660675.html> [Accessed 2.1.24].

¹⁶ Five original sheets. Lumumba invited Thomas Kanza to revise his text that morning, and he crossed out some of Lumumba’s paragraphs with a fine pen. When Lumumba reread his text during the two previous speeches, he

Acknowledgement

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Our heartfelt gratitude to His Excellency Professor Ndolamb Ngokwey, the current DRC's Ambassador to the UK. He has always been incredibly generous to us, acting as a true godfather and scientific mentor, sharing his readings and texts with us, and, as a ladder, providing us invaluable guidance for community projects and individual activities in support of our native land, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thanks to the authors who offered us their

overlooked Kanza's polite additions (in bold pen), such as 'Sire, Excellency...'. See Mbu-Mputu, N., "Au-delà du célèbre discours de Lumumba du 30 juin 1960", at <https://londonaggiornamento.word-press.com/2016/10/25/au-dela-du-celebre-discours-de-lumumba-du-30-juin-1960/>. [Accessed 24 Jan 2022], Mbu-Mputu (2024).

books, especially to the **Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren**, Belgium, which kindly offered us its 26 new DRC provinces' history books, copyright¹⁷, enabling our organisation to reprint them, and which also promised to donate further books on the Congo and Africa. We are also very grateful to all our contributors, especially the **Task Force** members and volunteers of this project. Readers are welcome to notify us of any typographical, spelling or other errors. We apologise for the partial and biased selection of this book's characters and the inevitable gaps and omissions in such a historical project, which requires great attention and guidance. The selected stories solely aim to stimulate interest in the rarely told shared history between the British Isles/UK and the DRC. Anyone can also join the Task Force to spread these work outcomes.

Finally

In the debate **Black Lives Matter** sparked following the Afro-American George Floyd murder on 25 May 2020 and its campaign to revisit black African history and culture narratives — including the demolition of slave traders and colonialists monuments — we argued that existing monuments should not be destroyed, otherwise, there was no point in stopping there and not to remove also all Roman remains disseminated and honoured throughout Europe, and Castles in Wales, as they symbolise past colonialism. But, 'changemakers' and 'black achievers' statues should be built instead, and all sides of the stories told, the contribution that avoided H. M. Stanley's statue from destruction in his native Denbigh, North Wales. I have a dream: **Building a monument to Edmund Dene Morel in the Congo** he never visited, and where he needs to become a historical character for his contribution to its freedom¹⁸.

Enjoy the reading!

•

¹⁷ Monographs of the DRC's provinces, <https://www.africamuseum.be/en/research/discover/publications/open-access/monographies-rdc>.

¹⁸ Much like Frantz Fanon did for an independent Algeria. After his death, Algeria obtained that his body be returned and he be buried with full honours in recognition of his role in the fight against colonisation and for Algerian independence. The same can be said of Roger Casement, another anti-Leopold II Congo hero who was hanged in London, but who was given an official funeral in his native Ireland due to his role in the country's fight for independence.

Chap I. Once Upon a Time... To Bridge the Gaps

THE HISTORY of all nations unfolds gradually. Hence, there is a need to revisit it and take into account all its ups and downs, especially when certain economic, social, political and community events and facts call for it.

The neo/post-colonial narrative divide

Following the killing of Black Afro-American George Floyd on 25 May 2020, the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement and campaigns has provided an opportunity to re-examine the usual narrative of African and Black post-slavery trade and neo-colonial history, especially when told solely from a Western perspective. This brings to mind the wise African saying that, *'in the absence of a lion's own griot, the narrative of the hunt always favours the hunter'* and diminishes the lion, even documenting the hunter's monthly arrogance. The lion's storyteller could have accurately recounted how the lion's roar made the hunter tremble. Such a revisiting of the past could be achieved not only by highlighting the African diaspora's homelands and Black heroes, as the Liverpool Slavery Museum does so well with its *Black Achievers Hall*¹⁹ and its portraits of the most renowned Black heroes, but also by voicing and empowering the now diaspora-trained and talented storytellers and academics to contribute to this narrative shift. Mentally, intellectually, culturally, and perhaps philosophically, Africa continues to be divided and perpetuated colonial ideological barriers imposed by the colonial languages adopted as national languages; thus, the division between French, Portuguese, English, Spanish, and Arab-speaking Africa persists.

It's important to convey, for example, the black African slave trade narrative. Contrary to the typical Western Ponce Pilatus mindset that Blacks and Africans Kings and chiefs bear the responsibility for this

¹⁹ List on p. 325. For example, at a conference, my friend Dr Olivette Otele, an expert on Slave trade history, a constant source of inspiration and encouragement, I discovered the stories of African resistance heroines, including Queen Nzinga of Angola and the women of Nder in Senegal, whom I often talk about.

inhumane trade as they sold their own brethren, it has to be clearly stated that, the Slave Trade was an inhumane European kidnapping business that was planned, sponsored, and legalised, particularly by the 1685 French “**Code Noir**” and even endorsed by the Catholic Church. Only Westerners profited from it, while Africans suffered its long-term consequences. The collaboration of a small number of Africans with invaders in the sale of human beings goes against the African culture and philosophy, where the proverb states *that it is better to die leaving people behind than to die leaving money*. Africans everywhere have fought and resisted. Also, it is important to underline that the Western slave trade was preceded by the Arab one, which also decimated Africa. The same must also be done in balancing the history of colonisation by emphasising its non-civilisational nature and showcasing the Africans who fought, resisted, and refused to succumb to slavery and colonisation.

Also, the same contribution must be made to smooth the narratives that equate all Europeans and whites who arrived in Africa up to the present day as rapists, thieves, villains, kidnappers, colonialists, imperialists, and slave traders. Just as some Europeans, particularly those on the political right wing, perpetuate and spread unverified stereotypes about Africa, they tend to lump all Africans and Blacks together and accuse them of committing all the sins of Israel. When living in the West, we must also avoid lumping all Western religions into the same negative narrative basket. Even missionaries, considered to be “good whites” by fighting tropical diseases and setting up education and maternity facilities, were not always welcome. The bad experience of the slave trade certainly made black people and Africans wary of all foreigners.

Without asserting that all the Europeans who came to Africa (or elsewhere) were saints, some of them made positive contributions, helped Africa to move forward, and even fought and died for Africans: **Edmund Dene Morel**, for example, dedicated his life to the Congolese people, even though he never set foot in the Congo. Morel and his Congo Reform Association put an end to this genocide of 10,000 Congolese who died as a consequence of Leopold II’s evil Congolese rubber exploitation. Unfortunately, as Morel’s name remains unmentioned in Congolese history, this “**Bo’ Biso**” project aims to contribute to filling in and bridging such a suicidal gap in the historical narrative and, most important, breaking the usual African “*neo/post-colonial narrative divide*”, meaning the

African historical narrative symbolically bounded by ideologically, mentally and intellectually colonial borders: despite independence, francophone characters and stories are only known and shared within these linguistic areas; the Portuguese-speaking African leaders and stories do not cross borders to be known and taught to English-speaking Africans, etc. Morel and Roger Casement are inaudible in the DRC itself.

And the same boundaries persist within the African and Black diaspora, except perhaps for the historical Pan-Africanism movement, which everyone generally embraces. French-speaking Black movements, such as Négritude, seem to have no place among Anglophones, even in the diaspora; Black Lives Matter appears to be an Anglophone initiative. The heroes also follow the same narrative curve. While normally, the new communication and networking facilities would make everything easier. The same attitude is required in the fight against mental and ideological Eurocentrism, which has always meant that Europe dictates the moral yardstick that the whole world must follow, including its hesitations and errors. This has only led to numerous abuses. Depending on interests, one is declared a dictator or a terrorist one day and a saint to be worshipped the next, without really knowing how or why double standards apply. Nelson Mandela's response when, once, questioned in the US about his relationship with Fidel Castro was revealing. Charles de Gaulle is a hero in France, but not among Africans. Mandela was considered a terrorist by the West and a hero even when in prison. The current French crisis in Africa, the French/NATO's assassination of President Muammar Gaddafi of Libya and the way they ousted President Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire, could not be more revealing.

However, this is in stark contrast to Black and African fathers, who were not only independence fighters and Pan-Africanism heroes, but also remained friends, met, visited, and appreciated each other regardless of colonial borders: Lumumba of DR Congo was friends with Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Sékou Touré of Guinea and Nasser of Egypt; for Sékou Touré, Nkrumah was his brother; during the Apartheid years, Nelson Mandela clandestinely travelled around the world with an Ethiopian passport and was welcome in Algeria and other countries; Amilcar Cabral of Bissau Guinea was assassinated in Guinea he used as his independentist movement rear-base; Robert Mugabe of the Zanu-PF of Zimbabwe, Samora Machel of Frelimo of Mozambique, Neto of the MPLA received supports from other

Africans; Algerian independence owes a great deal to Frantz Fanon of Martinique, an anti-colonialist ideologue whose writings influenced many Africans; the role played by the American naturalised Ghanaian W. E. B. Du Bois is unimaginable for the independence of Ghana.

Historical mistake: colonial borders...

This situation impacts the narrative and ideological relations between contemporary Africans themselves. The decolonisation of Africa was made difficult as it became the land of retreat and the final colonial stronghold Europeans fiercely defended, also a consequence of the African pioneers of independence's decisions, most of whom, especially the French-speaking, were drafted by the former metropolises according to their interests, opposed to those of Africa. Although these African independence fathers and great leaders decided to keep colonial borders inherited from the Berlin 1884-1885 scramble of Africa and, mistakenly, did not adopt the United States of Africa suggested by the Ghanaian President Kwame Nkrumah and other visionaries, with a single currency, army, foreign affairs, and a single capital city. Indeed, from the first steps to its independence, Africa failed to avoid the *"divide ut regnes"* trap set by the former colonisers, as it acceded to independence in the form of small and weak states incapable of managing themselves better and resisting the pressure of the former colonisers, materialised in 1964, when the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), founded on 25 May 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, changed to the African Union (AU) and founded on 9 July 2002 in Durban, South Africa, adopted its sacrosanct principle of *"the inviolability of borders inherited from colonisation"*²⁰.

²⁰ *"None could revise the colonial borders"*, a principle reinforced by Somalia, which tore itself apart in 1990 and could not be managed despite being a single country with a single tribe, religion and language. South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011. After years of war between the predominantly Black south and the predominantly Arab north, the ongoing conflict between the two main tribes, the Dinka and the Nuer, is making it difficult to exploit the country's only major source of wealth: oil. Eritrea gained independence from Ethiopia on 24 May 1993 and is said to have become a worthy autocratic country. Furthermore, the statements made by Rwandan leaders years ago, justifying their invasion of the DR Congo by falsely claiming that the former pre-colonial kingdom of Rwanda had lost land

Professor of History, former President Laurent Gbagbo, usually recalls Africans' major error during the colonial incursion and the slave trade: the failure to apply the basic principle of '*United we stand*'. While Europe unites, supports each other and avoids shooting each other on African soil, as demonstrated by the so-called '*Fashoda incident*' between the French and the British, Africa remained divided, each standing in its corner. When the Europeans invaded a kingdom or empire, the neighbouring chieftains didn't come to support and assist them in fighting the invaders, preferring to remain in their own corner as if it weren't their concern. While a Congolese proverb teaches that "*the duck must avoid mocking the decapitated hen, as the same pot will soon be used for its own head too*". The irony of the fate was that, once Europeans had subjugated that kingdom or those people, their neighbours were the next on the agenda: they were also attacked and suffered the same fate until the whole of Africa was colonised. While Europe manipulated Africa to prevent the formation of a United States of Africa in the 1960s, the same Europe has spent the last two decades dancing to the rhythm of a European Union modelled on the United States.

60 British Isles/UK-DRC shared history sites & plaques

The "**Bo' Biso**" project has successfully numbered, landmarked, and Google-mapped 60 British Isles sites that share a common history between the British Isles/UK and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on digital and printed maps. Future research, projects, and stories will undoubtedly uncover more, and the communities and grassroots 'shared history' project concept need to be spread to other continents, countries, and cities. The project also designed **golden square plaques** to be distributed to these identified sites to celebrate those chosen characters and to mark those sites forever. Among those heroes and sites, it is worth mentioning:

1. **Dr David Livingstone** (1813-1873): Missionary, explorer, and denunciations of the slave trade sent back to Africa to resolve the Burton and Speke Nile source dispute as they had returned from Africa with two contradicting theories: for Burton, the Nile's source was Lake Tanganyika, and for Speke, it was Lake Victoria. Stanley finally validated Speke's claim.

to the Congo because of these colonial borders, have since been proven to be contrary to maps and history (see Chapter XI, Section 6).

2. **Henry Morton Stanley (1841-1904)**, the greatest explorer of Africa, was born John Rowlands in Denbigh, North Wales. He

“Their [Congo Boys] graves tell the story of an ambitious project that brought Africa to Wales; a story that lay dormant in those graves for many years”
(Charlotte Williams, Sugar and Slate, Planet Books)

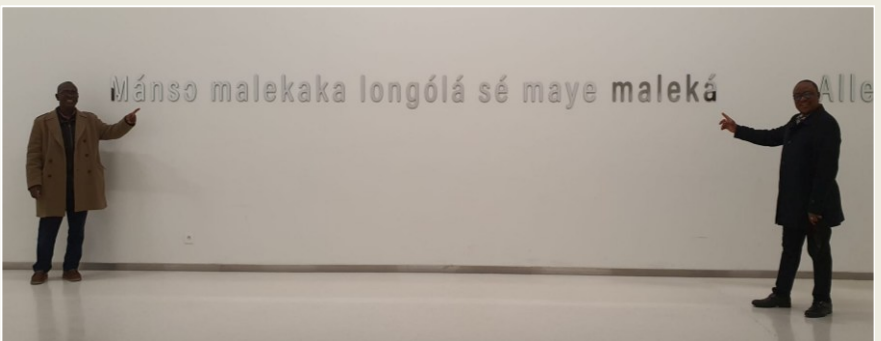
is famous for his greeting “*Dr Livingstone, I presume*”, which he said he used when he met Livingstone in Africa on November 10th, 1871. Stanley fixed the Nile source problem, explored the Congo River, mapped the current Congo, built and founded cities and roads, and architected the modern Congo while working for Leopold II, who had different goals from Stanley’s.

3. The Welsh pastor **William Hughes (1856-1924)** who established the Colwyn Bay (North of Wales) **Congo and Africa Institute of Wales (1890-1912)** and his first two **Congo Boys** students, **Kinkasa (1875-1888)** and **Nkanza (1877-1892)** arrived in 1885, died, and were buried in Wales.
4. **Edmund Dene Morel (1873–1924)**, who founded on 23 March 1904 in Liverpool **the Congo Reform Association (1904–1913)**, the first twentieth-century human rights movement, part of the British humanitarian tradition, against Congolese Leopold II’s genocide. He published books and a newspaper and used compiled photos of Leopold’s victims.
5. **Roger Casement (1864-1916)**, an independent Irish hero based in Northern Ireland, worked with H. M. Stanley in 1884 on the construction of the Matadi-Leopoldville road. Later, he was appointed the British Consul in the Congo in 1903 and commissioned to investigate and report on Leopold II’s atrocities to the British Parliament and sponsored Morel’s CRA.
6. Leopold II and his Congo “Red Rubber” are linked to the pneumatic tyre invented by **John Dunlop (1840-1921)**, the Scotsman living in Belfast who died in Dublin.
7. Having served as the hub of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, **Liverpool** benefited from Leopold II’s exploitation of the Congo; its ship companies entered into a contract with him.
8. Many British Isles towns, cities, and villages have a historical connection to the Congo, with numerous locations based in

London, including Livingstone's burial place, Stanley's residence and marriage site, the Royal Geographical Society, etc.

Avoiding the censor's role of separating the saints to be canonised from the demons to be hunted down from the pantheon of this shared history, the project only aims to learn from their change-making skills and, somehow, revolutionary or innovative visions. Negative stories and heroes also exist in the past and history, necessitating the correction of their mistakes and limitations upon discovery, while also considering their living contexts. In his final letter to his supporters, Rev. William Hughes, for example, wrote, ***"Do not forget to remember me"***. Also, to illustrate the sacrifices made by these (Protestant) missionaries, some of them were leaving behind their young children with often-missionary families, and some of the children born in the Congo were returned to England to live with foster families, and these parents did not return for nearly five years.

Also, anyone who comes across Leopold II's Congolese "Red Rubber" story is more than astonished and revolted by the paradox between sheer millions of deaths and the omertà surrounding it. Stunned to read a note referring to Mark Twain that he had been involved in the movement against slavery in the Congo, *where eight million people lost their lives*, Adam Hochschild decided to write his book, which became an indictment of Leopold II, subtitled in French: *Un holocauste oublié* (A Forgotten Holocaust). It is also important to understand the meaning of the title of Daniel Vangroeweghe's book, *Du sang sur les lianes* (Blood on the Lianas), which refers to the rubber latex extracted from wild climbing lianas from Congolese forests, and whose abusive exploitation has almost wiped them out.



TERVUREN MUSEUM ENTRANCE. Norbert Mbu-Mputu & Deo Gratias Katya Kasereka .Tout passe sauf le passé/Mánso malekaka longóla sé maye aléká/Alles geht vorbei außer der vergangenheit/Alles geht vorbei, außer der Vergangenheit
(The title of Belgian sociologist Luc Huyse's book dedicated to Apartheid)

FACSIMILE

Official Act of Congo's Accession to Independence

DECLARATION CONJOINTE DES GOUVERNEMENTS
CONGOLAIS ET BELGE.

Le Congo accède, ce jour, en plein
accord et amitié avec la Belgique, à l'indépendance
et à la souveraineté internationale.

Leopoldville, le 30 juin 1960.

Le Premier Ministre de
Belgique,

Le Premier Ministre du
Congo,

Le Ministre des Affaires
Etrangères de Belgique,

Le Ministre des Affaires
Etrangères du Congo,

Congolese and Belgian governments Joint declaration

Today, in full agreement and friendship with Belgium, the Congo accedes to independence and international sovereignty.

Leopoldville, 30 June 1960.

The Prime Minister of Belgium, The Prime Minister of Congo,
The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium, The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Congo,

Chap II. The Democratic Republic of the Congo

History Milestones: Interview with MBU-MPUTU²¹

A continent at the heart of Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a mosaic of cultures, languages and peoples united and jealous of their Congo, a country of 2,345,000 square kilometres, bordered by nine countries, 100,000. 000 inhabitants, with a rich and varied history, made up of ancient kingdoms, empires and royalty, but whose modern history is tinged with crises during the years of independence evidenced by the assassination of its leader and Prime Minister Lumumba along with Mpolo and Okito, the assassination controlled and directed by the Americans and the Belgians, with an invisible British hand, the French cowardly and passivity and the UN and its Swedish Secretary General Hammarskjöld acting by trial and error. After Leopold II's atrocities and the Belgian colonisation, this assassination plunged the country into crisis for several years because it caused the Congolese to lose faith in Western democracy, especially with Mobutu's 32-year dictatorship, during which he was supported for his role in blocking the road to communism during the Cold War while transformed the country to one of the poorest one in the world, despite Mobutu success in reuniting and pacifying it. However, on 17 May 1997, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and their mercenaries sponsored the AFDL rebellion, whose spokesman was Laurent-Desire Kabila. After those invaders and their proxy war discovered Congo's wealth and natural resources, specifically the coltan mineral and the new rubber, Rwanda has since patrolled the country via rebel groups in other new proxy wars since 1996. For nearly three decades, the ongoing Congo war, whose last episode is the resurgence of the M23 rebellion seizing major eastern cities, has seemed a complex and unresolved matter. How are the UN's 20,000 peacekeepers unable to put an end to these wars after twenty years? Furthermore, the lack of Congolese visionary leaders at all levels and the absence of an international community of 'good Samaritans' positively involved

²¹ Cfr: Mbu-Mputu, N. 2024. *L'autre Lumumba*..., Bristol: MediacomX, 2024.

beside the Congolese explain the distressing contrast between an immensely richer country and the poorest population, lack of basic infrastructure, and good governance. It's interesting to revisit such an incredible up and down, and turbulent history of these heroic Congolese people, who have remained resilient throughout the centuries.

*

The DRC before contact with Europe: Ethnic Groups, Tribes, Languages, Cultures and Traditions

How would you describe the present-day Congo before its first meeting with the West?

The current Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), with a surface area of 2,345,000 square kilometres and a population of around 100 million, consisted of independent kingdoms, empires and chiefdoms. These were either ruled by a vertical tribal chief who led several clans or sub-tribes, or by a horizontal confederal system of sub-tribal chiefs who shared a common ancestor, history, culture, language, customs and habits. Despite the wars and conflicts inherent in the people, Congolese and Africans had their own systems of political management, justice and judiciary, religion, monetary and barter systems, arts, and physical and mental health care structures before the West explored, invaded, and dismantled these traditional entities with the slave trade and mainly with the colonisation. Africans and Congolese had their cultures and traditions, philosophy and knowledge, orality transmitted from generation to generation through proverbs and tales, including initiations or learning and education system and structures, which were rooted in a social and economic system that placed the individual, whether male or female, child or adult, at the centre. This system also involved respect for nature and ecology, as well as respect for the dead and ancestors. This system was in near-perfect balance. They also believe in a God in heaven who is the master of everything and is assisted by spirits and invisible forces of nature. On earth, masters of the invisible — known as sorcerers, healers and soothsayers — ensure social cohesion and a sense of community. This forms a complete epistemology that blends into a hierarchical cosmogony. In short, they led rich and varied community lives, guided by their morals and respect for the hierarchy of beings and things. In these societies, traditions, habits and customs inherited from ancestors

occupy a special place, regulating society, moralising people, dictating laws and practices, and conveying the culture specific to each group and are materialised by the respect for the elders, and women should be considered sacred beings because they transmit life. Insulting (the genitalia of) someone's mum is a declaration of war. Everyone should be obliged to look after children and care for the elderly. These ancient and traditional societies were well-ordered and respected. Chieftaincy and royal succession also followed tribal principles passed down through the generations, so it was an insult to suggest that colonisation or evangelisation brought civilisation to Africa. Certain cultures, traditions, and customs are homogeneous, while others, such as the totem pole tradition, are specific to each people, ethnic group, or tribe.

Are all these cultures and traditions still alive today?

Yes, they are. Certainly, in competition, dialogue, and even opposition with the values and cultures that have arrived with modernity and contact with other continents, including Europe, notably through colonisation and evangelisation. Customary marriage rituals, for example, vary from culture to culture, but the traditional basis is the dowry that the man must pay to his wife's family; customary marriage takes precedence over civil and religious marriage, which cannot be celebrated without the former. Funeral rituals are also similar: after burial, a period of mourning is observed, ending with community celebrations where sorrows, cries and tears mingle with celebrations, songs, and dances to accompany the deceased and, above all, to provide psychological support to those in mourning. The education and care of children, adults, the elderly, and the vulnerable are matters for the entire community. The individual belongs and exists within society, with which he is interconnected in both directions, as what happens to him has an impact on the entire community, and what affects the community affects him as well. Even having adopted imported religions, Christianity or Islam, the Congolese remain attached to their traditional religion, like all Black Africans, and develop what Father Jean-Marc Ela described as a spiritual '*ambiguous adventure*', as they attend the church in the morning, visit the sorcerer and '*nganga*' (traditional priest, diviner, soothsayer, witch doctor, fetishist) in the evening for spiritual protections; he would have a medal around the neck, but still conserves his amulet and fetishist's in his pocket. Despite the undeniable benefits of modern medicine, its antibiotics, operations and vaccinations, the Congolese and

Africans continue to use traditional medicines made from tree bark, beverages, dust, etc. The Africanisation of the Catholic and Protestant Churches and the new African Christianities, such as the Kimbanguism of Congo, have reduced the gap between Africa and the imported religions. Celebrating masses and making prayers with songs and dances, sometimes with noted excesses, is evidence of religious inculturation through African cultures²².

And what about religion?

All Congolese, like all black Africans, are by definition religious: they believe in practices and ways of entering into contact with God, and in appointed people who act as mediators between the visible world of humans on earth and the divine of God and his citizens in heaven. In traditional Congo, this role is played by the '*ndoki*' (witch) and '*nganga*' (priests, diviners, ritual performers). When the revealed religions of Christianity and Islam arrived, Africans and Congolese adopted them because their beliefs simply corroborated what the Catholic creed proclaims: '*I believe in one God, creator of heaven and earth, of the visible and invisible universe*'. For a Congolese and an African, the invisible, spiritual, and metaphysical world is the true, real, and existing world; the physical on earth is only an illusion, a shadow, an obligatory passage. They adopted medals and holy water as they equal fetishes, the Catholic communion of saints reflects the belief in the (good) ancestors living in the village of the dead, where "*bad*" sorcerers are not welcomed; and the Catholic priests' chastity is welcomed because, in their religiosity, it is required to perform certain rituals. In the end, the Congolese experience what Ela described as a religious '*ambiguous adventure*', previously explained.

What is the Congolese denominational map?

The DRC is home to an estimated 45% Catholics, 35% Protestants and members of so-called revivalist (Eglises de réveil in French) or Pentecostal '*Wake up churches*'²³, 10% Kimbanguists (a church founded in the Congo by the prophet Simon Kimbangu) and 10% Muslims. Some individuals still practise the rites and

²² Cfr. in the bibliography books by Jean-Marc Ela.

²³ They are referred to by the pejorative expression in Lingala "*binzambinzambi*", smallest churches, hence the neologism in French "*égliettes*" I have since popularised to refer to sects. They have been springing up like mushrooms in the DRC since the 1990s with the political multipartism.

practices of traditional African religion, which are also integrated into the new revealed and book religions, bearing in mind the point made about the ambiguous African religious adventure. Muslim marabouts are an example of religious syncretism and the crossroads between Islam and traditional African beliefs, including divination.

How can we sociologically define or differentiate between ethnicity, tribe, clan, extended or nuclear family?

The nuclear family (the father, the mother and their children) is practically inaudible, understandable and inexplicable in Africa and Congo, it is absorbed by the extended family comprising the father, the mother, the children, the father's brothers (paternal uncles or 'young father'), the mother's brothers (maternal uncles, when the Congolese speak of the 'uncle', it's them), the father's sisters (paternal aunts, when the Congolese speak of the 'aunt', it's them), the mother's sisters (maternal aunt or 'young mother'), the grandparents, the step brothers, sisters, nephews, cousins, parents (non-existent notions), the cousins (non-existent notions), the nephews and nieces. The extended family is the foundation of society and the backbone of kinship, which is sacred, according to the saying in Lingala, "*singa ya famille ebendanaka, kasi ekatanaka te*" (the rope that binds kinship expands and stretches, but never breaks). All these extended families stemming from a common ancestor form a clan; many clans form a tribe speaking the same language, recognising a tribal land, and having the same habits and customs. And, the set of several tribes having linguistic variants that understand each other, whose ancestors had kinship or marriage relations, forms an ethnic group like the Mongo ethnic group, called Anamongo, including also the Batetela, the Bakongo or Ne Kongo, including all the tribes of Bas-Congo (Bantandu, Bayombe, Manyanga, etc.), etc. The complexities of parental relationships are also notable, such as the relationship between a nephew and his uncle in the matrilineal system and the relationship between the latter and his aunt or paternal uncle in the patrilineal system. In the matrilineal system, there is a similar relationship between brothers-in-law and paternal uncles, and between the latter and the aunt or paternal uncle in the patrilineal system. Then there are the hilarious and constantly mocked relationships between brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law. Not to mention the sanctity of the mother-in-law for the son-in-law and the father-in-law for the daughter's husband or son's wife! These parental relationships are a whole cultural ideology with its own laws and procedures.

What about the other people and parts of precolonial Africa?

The slave trade and colonisation disrupted and turned upside down the once well-organised traditional kingdoms and empires that populated ancient Africa, such as: the empire of **Ghana** (300c-1240c), the empire of **Mali** (1230c-1600/1610/1670) and its city of Timbuktu, an intellectual centre with universities and a Koranic school in the 15-16th centuries and its scholar heritage manuscripts hitherto preserved, and above all, its founder' emperor Soundjata Keita (reign: 1190-1255) during whose reign the Charter of Manden or the Charter of Kouroukanfuga dated to 1222/1236 and since transmitted orally and which was the first Declaration of Human Rights in the world, stated, for example, "*Article 5: Everyone has the right to life and the preservation of their physical integrity. Consequently, any attempt to take the life of another shall be punishable by death. (...) Article 9: The education of children is the responsibility of society as a whole. Paternal authority consequently belongs to all. Article 10: Let us express our mutual condolences. Article 11: When your wife or child runs away, do not chase them to the neighbour's house. (...) Article 14: Never offend women, our mothers. Article 15: Never lay a hand on a married woman before you have unsuccessfully called on her husband to intervene. Article 16: Women, in addition to their daily occupations, must be involved in all our governments. Article 17: Lies that have lived for 40 years must be regarded as truths. Article 18: Let's respect birthright. Article 19: Every man has two in-laws: the parents of the daughter he did not have and the word he spoke without any compulsion. We owe them respect and consideration. Article 20: Do not mistreat slaves, give them one day off a week and make sure they stop working at reasonable hours. You are the master of the slave and not of the sack he carries. Article 21: Do not pursue the wives of the chief, neighbour, marabout, fetishist, friend or associate. Article 22: Vanity is the sign of weakness, and humility the sign of greatness. Article 23: Never betray each other. Keep your word of honour. Article 24: Never harm strangers. (...) Article 26: The bull entrusted to you must not run the park. (...) Article 28: Young men may marry from the age of 20. Article 29: The dowry is fixed at 3 cattle: one for the girl, two for her father and mother. Article 30: Let us help those in need". Another emperor, Mansa Kankan Musa (reign: 1312-1332), is said to be the richest man of all time in the world who, during a pilgrimage to Mecca, distributed*

gold both on the way to and on the way back, driving down the price of this precious metal; the empire of Songhai (1464-1591), and the kingdoms of Mossi (1050c-1896/present), Haoussa (c. 1000-1804/1807), Benin (1180c-1897), Great Zimbabwe with its medieval brick ruins in south of Zimbabwe, Zulu once ruled by the intrepid Shaka Zulu (1787-1828) who opposed the Europeans invaders, and Samori Touré (c. 1828 - June 2, 1900) of the Wassoulou empire; etc.

Are there forgotten figures, places, facts or dates in the history of Africa and the Congo?

The history of Africa seems to be the one that was often taught and told by colonists. Despite their good intentions, foreigners are limited in what they know, can see, learn, have been told or translated, and much remains unknown to them and therefore to us, their disciples and learners. It is important for us to fill and to bridge such a gap. The Liverpool Slavery Museum, for example, devotes a whole section to "*Black Achievers*", whose names are listed in the appendix to this book. Among of them, the fathers of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), established in Addis Ababa on 25 May 1963 around the Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia: Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Ahmed Ben Bella of Algeria, Abdel Gamal Nasser of Egypt, Sékou Touré of Guinea, King Mohamed of Morocco, William Tolbert of Liberia, Sylvanus Olympio of Togo assassinated in 1963 before the founding of OAU he was drafting the constitution when assassinated, Julius Nyerere of Kenya and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, to name but a few. Other notable figures include the Congolese Lumumba, the Senegalese scholar and Egyptologist Cheikh Anta Diop and his works on the anteriority of black civilisation; Frantz Fanon, a Martinique ideologist who became Algerian and influenced post-colonial Africans; and African forgotten iron ladies such as Andree Blouin, a feminist ahead of her time who served in Lumumba's cabinet and campaigned for women to vote and participate in politics, Winnie Madikizela Mandela and the wives of Lumumba, Pierre Mulele, Thomas Sankara (Pauline Opango, Léonie Abo and Mariam Sankara, respectively), as well as the least known Nzima Antonius Wilhelm Amo Afer (c. 1703–c. 1753) kidnapped and brought to Germany from Nkubeam (now Ghana) in 1707: the first and only black Enlightenment philosopher who taught in German Universities of Wittenberg, Halle, and Jena; having been subjected to racism, returned to his native Ghana, where he died.

How were the ancient peoples of present-day Congo organised and governed?

As everywhere in Africa before the West, today's Congo was constituted of kingdoms and empires, each encompassing several tribal chiefdoms or ethnic kingdoms, as the case may be, ruled by monarchs with varying principles of succession and hierarchies. Some have persisted to the present day, sometimes after sober periods. One the probably best known was the **Kongo Kingdom** (14th-19th centuries), whose ruling king bore the title of **Mani Kongo** and whose capital was **Mbanza Kongo**, which became San Salvador (Saint Saviour) when its king who welcomed the Portuguese in 1482, was baptised and changed the name to the Christian one; the **Lunda Empire** (17th-19th), whose emperor bore the title of **Mwat Yav**; the **Luba Empire** (14th-19th), whose emperor bore the title of **Mulopwe**, the Mongo who did not have a specific chief ruling over all the people; the **Tio Kingdom** of the Bateke (14th-19th), the **Kuba Kingdom** (15th-20th century), well known for its artistic expressions, including Kuba carpets and masks, and whose king bore the title of **Nyimi**, etc.

And what about the Congolese tribes and ethnic groups?

There are around 300 tribes in the Congo today.

What makes you say “about”?

The tribe's names and numbers have never been updated. Very often politicised, especially around elections, some sub-tribes become tribes or vice versa, and some non-existent tribes, such as the Banyamulenge, require turning the tribe data upside down. In a recent research, Kyéngé (Kyéngé, 2024: 40) notes that, while Professor Jean Omasombo and the archaeologist Jean Cosmas Akakatshi have drawn up a list of 275 ethnic groups and tribes, classified according to their geographical territory, Professor Isidore Ndaywel, on his side, has listed 365 Congolese ethnic groups and tribes. Finally, in an interesting study, the renowned historian Jesuit Father Léon de Saint-Moulin²⁴ shows that the Congo was not a crumbling mass of 450 tribes, but only 250, grouped into eight mapped linguistic families: Bas-Congo, Kwango, Kwilu and Kasai Occidental, Cuvette Centrale, Ubangi, Province Orientale, Kivu-

²⁴ De Saint-Moulin, L., [://efaidnbmnnnibpca-jpcglclefindmkaj/https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/fe71-8e13-45ba-44ca-8447-105fd4ef66c5/content](https://efaidnbmnnnibpca-jpcglclefindmkaj/https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/fe71-8e13-45ba-44ca-8447-105fd4ef66c5/content), [Visited on 23/12/2024].

Maniema, Nord-Katanga and Kasai-Oriental, and Sud-Katanga. As a result of migration, there are ‘*cohabitation areas*’ where tribes and ethnic groups live together and speak more than one language²⁵. Those DRC tribes are divided into several ethnic groups: the **Bantu** (around 80% of the population), whose main tribes are the Luba, Mongo, Kuba, Kongo, Lunda, Tchokwe, Tetela, Yaka, Bangala, Shi, Nande, Hunde, Nyanga, Tembo, and Bembe; the **Sudanese**, including the Ngbandi, Ngbaka, Mbanja, Moru-Mangbetu, and Zande; the **Nilotics**, including the Alur, and Lugbara; the **Chamites** (Hima); and the **Pygmies** (Twa), nomads living in the forests and considered to be the first indigenous peoples of the Congo.

The pygmies (Batwa)

The pygmies (Batwa in the DRC) are considered to be the first inhabitants of many central African countries. They are nomadic peoples of the great forests who have maintained a natural way of life and preserved their ancient traditions. They possess the knowledge of natural medicine, using leaves, bark, beverages, and root powders to create remedies. Their balanced diet is just as natural, and their songs and dances are sometimes polyphonic and rhythmic. According to their mythology, they are considered (and consider themselves) to be an inferior people. They live in hamlets alongside the Bantu, some of whom protect and guard them. Some clans even have their own pygmies working for them. They speak their language, but also use the language of their neighbours, whom the pygmies consider to be their masters. They do not have a traditional hierarchical system of power. They live in clans, and it is only recently, with the apostolate of the missionaries, that they have begun to go to school and abandon

²⁵ In DRC, the Mbala tribe is subdivided into the Mbala of Pay Kongila, also known as the ‘*Pays sans “s”*’, the Mbala of Fatundu and so on. The Sakata are a federation of the Saa, Tow, Dja, Tere and Bai, who are members of the Sakata tribe, with their land to be a united chieftains/kingdoms confederation. The Luba are divided into Luba Shankadi, also known as the Luba Loolo, who live in the region of Katanga and speak the Kiluba and are also known as the Balubakat because of the Balubakat/Baluba du Katanga political party, founded, at independence, by their leader Jason Sendwe; the Luba Lubilanji who speak Tshiluba and live in the former province of Kasai Oriental, and finally the Luluwa (Lulwa) of the former province of Kasai Occidental which name comes from the fact that they live on the banks of the Luluwa River.

their traditional way of life, which has also become difficult because the forest, their living environment, is being overexploited, making their lives untenable. They are now referred to as 'indigenous peoples', and live in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), the Central African Republic, Gabon, Cameroon, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Madagascar. Despite their legendary tabloid small size, the forest holds no secrets for the Pygmies.

What about the borders of those tribes' lands and territories?

Everyone knows the traditional boundaries of clan lands²⁶ or tribal territories, often natural: rivers, streams, forests, and hills.

²⁶ Each Sakata (of the Mai-Ndombe)'s clan, for example, has its lands, '(b)obla', whose boundaries are clearly defined, sharing the same name as the clan. In a quote, Father Jules Denis, the Basakata apostle who founded the first catholic parish of Bokoro in 1910 for the entire Basakata, wrote: *'zina lese kebwi ya zina lese bobla ndo zina l'anda mon'* (The clan has the same name with its land). 'Mbey', the 'obla' manager, is different from the king of the people, 'Mojuu'; each respects the limits of its power and competency. Sakata proverb says: *'Ujuu onii be leshaon, mbey onii be leban'* (Mojuu power is equivalent to that of a village courtyard, whereas Mbey's is to that of a small shed in the middle of the village). A chieftaincy/kingdom, or 'ijuu', has several 'bobla', and made of federated matrilineal chieftaincies/kingdoms, the Basakata territory does not have one customary king such as the Bayeke's 'M'Siri', the Tchokwe's 'Mwant Yav', the Kuba's 'Nym(i)', and the Baluba's 'Mulopwe' (only one of whom was ephemeral and self-appointed: Albert Kalonji). Each MuSakata belongs to his maternal clan 'kebwi'; however, the paternal clan 'keji' has cultural prerogatives over him: only a father clan of a woman can perform the marriage ritual and receive the dowry, and a MuSakata can only be buried in his father's clan 'bobla'. This traditional system avoids concentrating the power in just one person or group: 'mbey' rules the land, 'moju' rules the people; also, a 'mbey' or a 'moju' knows that the owner of his power to whom he pays tribute and respect, is either his mother or his sister, the latter does not exercise it herself but delegates it either to her son or her brother. The relationship between 'pipi' (uncle) and his nephew 'mwa mpai' is complex: The nephew refers to his uncle's wife as his 'ukaa ne ken-zinzaa' (sister-in-law), the nieces of the same uncle call the same wife 'mee' (mum), and the children of the uncle call their father's nephew 'tee n'ukien' (paternal uncle) and their father's nieces 'kaka' (sisters). But, under no circumstances should the nephew practise levirate. (Nkiere Bokuna Mpa-Onsu, 1976, 1984; Bekaert, S. 1978).

Traditional procedures exist to fix potential land conflicts. However, there are, luckily, areas of cohabitation between these bordered territories, where tribes, through marriage and migration, belong to more than one territory. African and Congolese lands are inalienable and can never be sold, but can only be leased for a fixed period. Any foreigner can live anywhere, subject to respect for local customs and traditions. Hence the aberration of Leopold II decree declaring '*all vacant Congolese land*' to become his private property, as is also the DRC so-called '*Bakanjika Law*' proposed by the Member of Parliament Bakanjika Isaac-Gérard, voted in parliament on 28 May 1966, promulgated on 7 June 1966 by the Head of State, Lieutenant-General Mobutu, and stipulating that '*le sol et le sous-sol appartiennent à l'Etat*' (*the soil and subsoil belong to the State*), which is an expropriation of the traditional power, even if the law stopped the Belgian expropriation of Congolese lands which owners are the clans and tribes. The current situation where crooked businessmen are given lands after they corrupt civil servants, and without involving and consulting local populations, often find themselves being requested by strangers with mapped land permits to drive off their lands, and without even respecting their dead, as the villages' cemeteries are desecrated, the tombs destroyed, is these neo-Leopold II's laws consequence. Just as customary marriage takes precedence over religious and civil ones to be performed after the customary happened, local communities and indigenous peoples should also be consulted on the sale or lease of the land, of which they are the owners.

What are the distinctive cultures and habits of these tribes and ethnic groups? Are there any commonalities?

Each person, tribe, or ethnic group has, of course, its own culture and traditions. But there are also certain habits, customs, and cultural practices common to and shared by all the ethnic groups and tribes of the Congo. These include the belief in one God, each of them name by its way, '*Nzambe*' (Lingala), '*Nzambi [mpungu]*' (Kikongo), '*Mungu*' (Swahili), '*Mvidi Mukulu*'/'*Mukalenga*' (Tshiluba), who created everything under the sunshine, and also the belief in witchcraft, '*kindoki*' in Lingala and Kikongo, '*buloji*' in Swahili, and '*mupongo*' in Tshiluba: an invisible neutral power and force to do good or harm, depending on the use, providing its owner with special knowledge, and which serves also as a community moral foundation (Hebga, 1979, 1982; Lufuluabo, 1977; Buakasa, 1980; Mbu Mputu, Unpublished). Other practices include the use of

fetishes, '*nkisi*' in Lingala and Kikongo, or impersonal natural forces that are invisibly imprisoned in small (wooden) objects and used as capacitors for invisible forces, and the belief in invisible beings with supernatural powers in waters, forests and savannahs. Other common practices include twin rituals, the roles and positions of the oldest members and elders, exogamous marriage, and the accepted practice of polygamy. In Congolese culture, there is community solidarity with respect given to elders, children to be cared for, and women recognised as the foundation of the human race, the clan, and the tribe. Also, the extended family plays an important and central role; its symbol is the parental network hub made of parents, children, cousins, nephews, uncles, aunts, grandparents, stepfathers, stepmothers, stepbrothers, and stepsisters. Additionally, the use of dance, oral literature, knowledge, proverbs, tales, legends, myths, and mythologies is prevalent. And the Congolese respect the dead, to whom they perform various rituals.

What made tribes or ethnic groups different?

Each tribe also has its own culture, customs, and traditions that set it apart from others. Other Congolese tribes feared the Bayanzi of Bandundu for their '*kitsul*' cultural practice, meaning that, since her birth, any female child could be ritually forced to become a spouse of an elder of the family, such as an uncle or grandfather. Such a force-married young girl could be collected by his so-called ritual husband when she becomes a teenager, and neither she nor her parents could oppose it. No man, however young, can marry her, and if she does so, her '*kitsul*' has the right to collect her and marry her. The (Bashi) Lele were practising the ritual culture of polyandry, meaning that one woman can marry many men, while the Basakata carry the reputation of practicing mystically witchcraft able to transform a human into an elephant, which, in the forest, becomes a look-alike of the person still living in the village to which it is metaphysically connected, so that anyone wishing to harm or kill the still living human in the village would simply have to harm and kill that elephant with an immediate impact on the concerned person in the village. The Baluba's '*tshibaw*' preserves a woman's marital fidelity by publicly parading naked an adulterous married woman to wash away such a cultural shame affront. The Bakongo are known for their respect for their elders, '*Mbuta*', and especially for their practice of '*Kinzonzi*': when there is a meeting and problems to be resolved in the family and the community, the

elders would gather in secret after having listened to each other, debate, exchange and then return with the solution that everyone will approve. Each tribe has a practice that is derided or a custom that is feared by others: those who eat turtles mock snake eaters; tribes practising patriarchy, for whom children belong to the husband's clan, dismiss the matrilineal system, where children belong to their mother's clan, and vice versa. Congolese also believe that the leopard is the king of beasts, which is why it is the symbol of chiefs and kings, although in savannahs it is more likely to be the lion.

Have customs and habits in the Congo changed as a result of modernity and contact with foreign cultures?

While some habits and customs remain unchanged, others are changing as a result of contact with other cultures and peoples. Certain, even tribal, ethnic groups or country dietary habits are adopted by foreigners, and the Congolese also adopt and copy those of others. One can notice a clash of cultures leading to either a symbiosis, opposition or even competition between the Congolese culture jostling to surpass or crush others. This is exacerbated by the conflict between traditional cultural and religious practices and the rapid emergence of new forms of Pentecostal religions that are swiftly rendering them obsolete or condemning any cultural respect to be evil. Also, there are common and shared Congolese customs and cultures, including the role and place of extended family, the marriage and the polygamy acceptance, the status of men and women, any child to be prioritised and cared for in any case, the respect for one's word and the respect for the dead, and for elders and ancestors.

Are there examples of this competition or opposition between Congolese and those imported or foreign' cultures?

Where there is a conflict of interpretation, custom and tradition take precedence over modernity, and customary law takes precedence over civil law. This is also true of religious beliefs: in the case of marriage, for example, customary marriage in several stages constitutes the first marriage. The fundamental ritual of this is the man's payment of the dowry to his fiancée's family. This is followed by the civil ceremony at the town hall and then the religious marriage. Certain rituals, such as those involving twins and mourners withdrawing, involve a real confrontation with custom: many people want their twins to be blessed by a priest and prayed for by a pastor instead of organising the usual twins ritual. However, it is when a problem arises that recourse to custom is quickly made. For example, when

there is a problem with interpreting a will, the complications related to customary law on the division of inheritance are not straightforward. This is especially the case as customary law provides that when a person dies, their family and clan are entitled to certain inheritances. The division or differentiation with customary law also poses a problem when it comes to the rights and duties of the modern state over land or populations, as the modern state often acts as a usurper. In the event of conflict or the need for interpretation of customs, the wise men who advise chiefs and kings are the appointed regulators. It is also interesting to see modern analyses that employ the rigour of various disciplines to study these African customs and traditions. These customs and traditions are not stupid, false, or to be eradicated, as some have suggested. As numerous studies have shown, they reveal logic, laws, intelligence and sensible cultural and traditional practices.

What about the traditional or tribal languages?

Languages and cultural expressions evolve and change when they come into contact with other cultures. Amidst these changes, a palpable fear emerges: many cultures are disappearing, either due to disuse or adoption, particularly by foreign European cultures. And, many languages could disappear within just a few years. In towns and cities, only regional languages are being used and spreading. This is particularly pertinent given the legacy of colonisation, which has led to the belief that speaking a tribal language makes one inferior, disconnected and unintelligent compared to the one using French. The rural exodus and population demographic boom that have turned former villages into large and non-traditional centres are also contributing to this situation and need to be addressed quickly. And, the lack of an academy to regulate these regional languages means they are often mistreated in writing.

“Kindoki”/witchcraft: a power, a knowledge and an ideology which is a foundation of an ethic

Could we assert that the Congolese and Africans are confined by beliefs in witchcraft, irrespective of what might be said?

Imprisoned? No. They believe that the ‘*kindoki*’ can be found everywhere and at all times. Even those preaching not to believe in it, secretly practise and believe in the ‘*kindoki*’. Two sayings: “*Hey, you, monkey, you hide for nothing as your tail makes you*

see”, reminds Professor Buakasa in his masterpiece on the subject amongst the Bakongo²⁷. And among the Basakata, where I researched the subject, a proverb says: “*How can you think that there is no sorcery under water, so who could have made the shrimp bend?*” ‘*Kindoki*’ is a trilogy: a power, a knowledge and an ideology which implicated an ethic. As a power, the “kindoki” witchcraft means first the person who “is with” an invisible, ambivalent, impersonal, invisible, suprasensible, metaphysical force or power named the “kindoki”²⁸). As a knowledge (or a perceptive and unfailing intelligence, as the Sakata saying goes ‘*jii l’ulwo*’ meaning the sorcerer’s eye which sees and perceives even in the dark, in time and space, the “witch/ndoki” is the one who knows the deep and invisible side of the things and beings, a function exercised by the ‘*nganga*’, diviner, fetishist, doctor, griot; ‘*ndoki*’ (a witch) is also the one who could act and operate without any failure and a sorcerer is known to have two (pairs of) eyes: the normal day time eyes of any human, and the second powerful one making him able to see and perceive the unsee, invisible, and metaphysical and also of seeing very far into past, present and future time and space). The saying in Kisakata, for example, is that ‘*anzee m’ulwo*’ (the witch and his clever lies).²⁹ And,

²⁷ As I was worried about a childhood friend former Catholic priest, who had become an exorcist and imprisoned for a death that occurred after his ceremonies, I was told how, during his trial, after the verdict of his imprisonment, the same judge went to consult him, asking for prayers and some holy water to chase these competitors using fetish practices against him. Incredible!

²⁸ We refer to Father Tempels’ book “*La Philosophie bantoue*” (Bantu Philosophy), in which he states that, for the Bantu, “*being is equal to strength*”. However, this was swiftly challenged by new contemporary African philosophers, including Alexis Kagame (Rwanda), Paulin Hountondji (Benin), Marcien Towa (Cameroon) and Eboussi Boulaga (Cameroon), who argued that “*strength*” is merely an attribute of “*being*”. In a famous essay, the Congolese Matungulu Otene concludes that, among the Bantu, “*being is with strength*”. To illustrate this, he explains the absence of the verb “to have” in Bantu languages, which is replaced by the verb “to be with”. For example, “I have a child” is expressed as “*Nazali na mwana*” in Lingala and “*Mono kele tii mwana*” in Kikongo, which means “I am with a child”, because relationships are ontological, not possessive as in the West.

²⁹ Because, as with any business of mortals, ‘nganga’ sometimes succeeds and also has failures, the Basakata proverb says that “*bebaon bese ngee, abeka se ka mpa be, akpa se ka mpa be*” that the lies of a witch-hunter-sorcerer, it is through them that we heal/they can heal us, it is also through them that we die/lead us to death.

finally, '*kindoki*' is an *ideology*, it means a certain way to explain and understand things, beings, facts, events, what happened and what may happen, and no one would question the truth or the lie of any "kindoki" fact or story. In fact, by definition, humans don't like to take responsibility for evil, calamity, blunders or even mistakes. Thus, "kindoki" becomes an ideology — a widely accepted way of thinking, explaining, and understanding that requires no proof — and a cultural dogma that explains and provides an understanding of material disparity, sin and communal fault. This ideology becomes the foundation and safeguard of *social ethics*. In societies where religion is paramount, "kindoki" is also the lifeblood of traditional African religions. It sees everything, knows everything, foresees everything and remembers everything. In short, "kindoki" can be explained as a *power*, a *knowledge* that underpins *ethics* and cements social and community morals, an ideology of explaining and understanding deeply events, beings and thinks. It encompasses all paranormal and metaphysical phenomena and facts.

Please, could you explain deeply?

For the Congolese, as for all black Africans, anything that is speculative, incomprehensible, beyond comprehension, inexplicable, etc. is '*kindoki*' (witchcraft): a gifted child, a cripple, twins, someone who excels in an art or profession, anything that is suprasensible, supranormal, metaphysical, the true essence of things and beings, is witchcraft or, better still, '*kindoki*'. I always suggest using it in the African language where there is bad and wicked "*kindoki*" that can kill, curse, even kill mystically, or as all Congolese say, "*eat someone spiritually*", and there is also good '*kindoki*', the '*kindoki*' that safeguards the clan, ensures the fertility of the women, watches over the village, the tribe and the clan, ensures prosperity and good community hunting and fishing. You can move from one camp to another. It has its principles, its antidotes, its vaccines, its limits, and its boundaries. It is, and has, a coded language, an occult, hierarchical, and structured secret society, with, of course, some slip-ups and collective and personal resignation. It is said, for example, that a woman's '*kindoki*' is ruthless and more perceptive than that of a normal man. Twins, for example, are said to be witch children, but of good witchcraft, and therefore immune to all witch attacks and curses. Some fetishes immunise against the bad '*kindoki*'; the best and most powerful of them is to have good behaviour, be a good citizen, respect customs and

traditions, and respect the commandments left by the elders, *'nsiku ya bambuta'* in Kikongo: do not lie, do not take another's wife, do not steal, etc. All immorality is severely punished by *'kindoki'*.

What role does it plays in the community and for individuals?

By definition, the Bantu does not like to be victimised. They will always blame someone else when faced with misfortune, an inexplicable situation or an accident. Everything that happens, especially death, must have an invisible cause. And *'kindoki'*, an ideology of justification, becomes the best safety valve for not taking responsibility: someone who commits a traffic accident will attribute the cause to a bad spell or a curse from a sorcerer who will have to be found or made, the uncles and elders of the clan being the best nominees; the one who has failed in his business will attribute the cause to a bad spell. The difference, for example, between the true witch doctors of the past and the exorcists of today is that the traditional *'nganga'* was a priesthood and could, for example, exonerate an accused of *'kindoki'* or, knowing his limits of power and knowledge, send him to another when the accusation exceeded his competence. This is true for traditional medicine and doctors who were not the equivalent of modern medicine's general practitioners, but rather specialists curing one or more specific illnesses according to the secrets of plants, leaves, bark, and roots, often transmitted within the family and clan circle. There are general practices and knowledge that everyone knows, leaves and barks to cure coughs, scabies, fevers, while specialists keep practices for more serious illnesses. Alas, cultures have changed.

Twin's Ritual

Many tribes and ethnic groups believe twins to be witch children (i.e. sacred children) and that they come and are sent from the village of the dead, the clan ancestors, and the protective spirits of the spirit world. They are connected to the genie of the twins, called 'Mazay' in Basakata. Their birth is considered to have a special and sacred character, and they are believed to possess supernatural powers that can bring benefits or harm. Ceremonies are organised at birth, with songs — especially obscene ones — and erotic dances celebrating the fertility of their parents, also often greeted by pointing to their genitals. Twins are never buried in the communal village cemetery, but instead have their own cemeteries, often located on

high ground at crossroads and called by the Basakata 'Mazay'. This is reflected in the proverb, 'Kabee jon y'anzay nghe' ('The cemetery of twins never equals that of the village'). They also have small ritual pots containing white or reddish powder ('lepion' among the Basakata), which is used for various rituals involving them. They and their parents adhere to a moral code, making them charitable individuals who cannot deny anyone anything, and who cannot be denied anything themselves. Also, twins have specific names, the eldest and the second eldest, regardless of sex, are called, according to tribes, Nsimba and Nzuzi (Bakongo tribe), Mbuyi and Kanku (Baluba from Kasai), Kyungu and Kabange (Balubakat), Mboyo and Boketshu (Mongo and their relatives: Nkundo, Ekonda, Ntomba, etc.); Ngoy and Mukonkole (Basongye), Omba and Shako (Tetela), Maboso and Mangongo (Mbuza), Cikuru and Cito (Bashi), Kakuru and Katoto (Bahunde), Nguru and Kakuru (Nande), Embo and Empi (Ambuun), Mbo and Mpia (Basakata, where 'Mbo' can also be 'Mbu' or 'Mvu', and 'Sengele'), Pi and Mbu (Bambala), and so on. The Bayaka distinguish the twins according to their sex: the first is called Nsimba and the second Nzuzi for the girls, while boys are called Nkosi and Makanzu, respectively. Among the Bayombe, twin girls were formerly called Nsimba and Nzuzi, while boys were called, respectively, Kumbu and Nyimi; they have since abandoned this practice to adopt all Bakongo's. The current cohabitation of tribes means that some adopt the names of others. Any child born after the twins has their ritual name, but is not honoured like their twins' elders: he is named Katumwa (Bakongo), Katuma (Baluba), Kambungu (Bayaka) and Mputu (Basakata, where he may be called 'Mfry' if he is a male, and Basengele). There are also false twins because twins are a religious rather than a biological phenomenon: the ancestors who sent them may separate them from their mothers and birth them on different dates, which the diviner or fetishist will detect. These twins from different mothers enjoy all the same honours as the others. As for the parents of twins, the father and mother are called, respectively, Kabodi (mother only, Bayaka), Shambuyi and Muambuyi (Baluba), Tata and Mama Mapasa (Bakongo, Bangala). Triplets benefit from the same rituals as twins. The first and third bear the same names as the first and second

twins: 'Mbo' and 'Mpia'. Basakata honour the second of triplets by the name and title of 'Mojuu' (customary chief) to whom the reigning king 'Mojuu itwi' offers a portion of land within his chieftdom.

But what about the widespread belief that the 'ndoki' eat their victims? How do they do it? How do they operate?

This belief is widespread in African, black and Bantou societies where everyone believes in witchcraft. According to Bantu philosophy and culture, the world and existence are divided into the sensible, material and visible, and the suprasensible, metaphysical and invisible ones. According to this belief, the true world, the real existence and world are the suprasensible, metaphysical, invisible world, while the material and sensible are merely a shadow of it, what Hindu philosophy named "maya": illusion. Every individual, being, thing, reality, event and action that breathes and exists also obeys this rule of existence. Humans are then divided into a physical part consisting of flesh, bones and water, "*nun*" in Kisakata, for example, my field of research, and an invisible part that is sometimes further divided into two: the soul, "*un'ma*" in Kisakata, and the shadow or double "*keyii*", in Kisakata. It is this part of the human being that the sorcerer, the master of the invisible world, can invisibly manipulate, imprison, kill, capture and eat. According to this belief, God has the final say over the death of a human being because he is the master of the soul of man. Still, sorcerers can cast spells and invisibly eat people at night, leaving them alive but nothing more than lifeless shells. True or false? It all depends on one's belief in "kindoki". But almost everyone believes in it. Just as the visible world has a hierarchy, so does the invisible world, where beings and things are hierarchised according to their possession of forces and powers, with the powerful and Almighty God³⁰ at the top of them, followed by the invisible and impersonal spirits or genies of nature, "*bilima*" in lingala, then the clan ancestors underground or in the village of the dead. All Africans believe God is the creator of heaven and earth, and of the visible and invisible worlds. After creation, he withdrew to the heavens, leaving

³⁰ In African and Black culture, God is referred to by many names that signify his strength and power. He is often referred to as the Most High or the Almighty. In Kisakata, he is known as "Mpa'mfna" (without hatred), "Nga loo" (the owner of the heaven), "Nzawn nele o loo" (Most High God).

the management of daily affairs in the hands of invisible forces of nature. These forces are assisted by ancestors who have died and been buried in cemeteries or villages of the dead. They also believe that the world, visible and invisible, is full of invisible beings such as “ogres” and “ghosts”³¹. The “bandoki” (sorcerers) ensure the transition/mediation between the heavens/God/invisible and the human earth/visible world. In doing so, they can also capture and imprison some of these supernatural, metaphysical and invisible forces in objects that become condensers of force and power: the Bakongo name these objects “nkisi”, used for worship and as talismans. On Earth, sorcerers also have their hierarchy in accordance with their power. Next come fetishes, or objects made mainly with wood, playing the role of condensers of power and strength and used either to protect oneself, cause harm to others or ward off evil or curse. As with witchcraft, “Kindoki”, which is neither good nor bad in itself, so are the fetishes: some are good, others bad, and the third can play both roles. Those spirits are then tamed and taken on as statues or amulets. There are plenty of rituals and practices by a special “Nganga” to detect who is responsible for any dead...

What is the social role of a sorcerer?

Similar to prophets in Judaism or priests in Christianity, the “ndoki” is a quasi-priest who acts as an intermediary and mediator, bridging humans on earth and heaven; he is the ultimate intermediary between the visible and invisible worlds. These fetishes and spirits are worshipped, and sacrifices are made to them, sometimes on days close to Christian Sundays or Jewish Sabbaths. Among the Basakata, for example, who practised a four-day week, the last day, “le shuu le mpka” (Forbidden Day), was a holiday, during which no one could carry out economic work on the land, hunt or fish. The first ‘Mpka’ of the new moon was particularly significant: all owners of genies and fetishes displayed them in the public square, and everyone came to worship or consult them. Sometimes, on market day, the ceremonial event was concluded with dances and celebrations where people rubbed themselves with white or red kaolin (“lepion”) and enjoyed the “lekon” (traditional four-string

³¹ The Basakata people distinguish between the “kekekaa” (ghost) and the “kenshunshu” (ogre), which is a mythological evil spirit that can take human form and has an odd appearance. In some myths, particularly those intended for children, it is said to have nine heads with a big mouth on the top.

guitar) player's performance. These rituals have now disappeared, wiped out by the Christian Sunday.

'Bilima': impersonal spirits and forces of nature.

Congolese people believe in 'bilima', water spirits that inhabit dark places in forests or areas of the river with intense swirls. Every village and town has its own 'elima', which can protect or punish the community. In Mai-Ndombe province, these water spirits are particularly renowned, and some of their names were adopted for schools during the Zairianisation period, when public buildings and schools had to abandon their Catholic saints' names. Some Mai-Ndombe villages, towns and cities and their bilima have their own 'bilima': Mushie (Nkanka), Nioki (Mongankolo), Kutu (Lefe), Bokoro (Mankoni and Kebia), Tolo (Nina-Electric Fish), Inongo (Nkanda and Nzako), Kiri (Ngende and Mbili), and Momb'Ipoku, the powerful and feared lord of the water spirits based on his same-name island in Lake Mai-Ndombe, who manifests himself in giant waves. Due to the presence of those bilima, every boy born in Inongo is named Nkanda and every girl is named Nzako; similarly, every boy born in Kiri is named Ngende, and every girl is named Mbili.

Some children have names that depend on the circumstances of their birth. Among the Basakata, a child born during a rainstorm is called Nkiere, a premature baby is called Kesho, and a child born coughing is called Mbonkoso.

What about the child 'ndoki' (witch)?

The prevailing practice or belief in child sorcery is relatively recent, a phenomenon that has emerged. Of course, even if a child can be given 'kindoki' at birth³² (something that can only be done by a

³² My research reveals that the Basakata, for example, believe in three ways of acquiring the witchcraft, 'ilwo', 'nkuri', or 'bengo' in Kisakata: 1. The 'ilwo letse k'ikfun' (witchcraft inherited from the womb by an elder of the clan (uncle, father, grand-father) in charge of watch and wait for the child adulthood to complete the initiation called 'ompumpula mii' (open his eyes) if not the 'ilwo l'akeba' (uncooked witchcraft at term), 2. The 'ilwo le mpemba' (witchcraft transmitted by force, without the consent of the receiver). In a video, the President of the Republic of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, recounts that his earliest memory is of his father taking him, the youngest child, to an initiation ceremony. However, he could not talk about it (because it was a secret

member of the clan, following the rituals and regulatory procedures, and taking into account various elements, observations, and needs), He must wait until adulthood to practise his '*kindoki*', which by then is harmless and in a latent state, following an initiation by an elder '*ndoki*' relative who will act as a mentor to prevent the newcomer to the corporation from going off the rails. Furthermore, modern exorcist practices removing '*kindoki*' from children by mistreating them constitute a sociological swindle: the master sorcerer removes harmless '*kindoki*' from a child without the child's awareness, and any visual and physical ritual being conducted, as '*kindoki*' is a power that, if you believe in it, is invisible, metaphysical. There is much to consume and discuss on this topic.

What about the albinos?

Any child born with a disability or deformity is considered a witch child: bewitched, cursed, or dependent on their parents' fetishes³³. Similarly, there are many rumours and beliefs about the witchcraft and metaphysical powers of albinos, as they do not have the same normal skin as others. In some cultures, it is believed that possessing an albino's blood, hair, or other body parts will imbue one with power. This has led to their manhunts, persecutions and killings in some African societies and communities.

Is 'Kindoki' a simple pipe dream, or is it a reality?

It all depends. As Father Hebga states in his books, if it is a chimera, it risks being a dangerous chimera. The experience of Jesuit Father Eric de Rosny in Cameroon is interesting. In his book, *Les Yeux de ma chèvre* (The eyes of my goat) (Collection Terre Humaine, Plon, 1981), he recounted how he was initiated into '*ndimsi*' (which means '*the hidden realities of the earth*') to become '*nganga*' in Douala, Cameroon, and how a goat was sacrificed to open his eyes and how afterwards he began to truly see the invisible and especially the violence of relationships between men, and became a member of the brotherhood of '*beyoum ba bato*' (stem men) among the Douala.

ritual that could never be revealed to outsiders) and 3. The *ilwo le njinjan*' (the sorcery solicited oneself), the most dangerous because the price to pay is never known and, according to the physical principle of '*nothing is created, nothing is lost*', the power of this requested '*kindoki*' will depend on the sacrifice (sometimes human, its mother, its children, its fertility) to immolate.

³³ For example, strangely enough, almost all the employees of the Catholic Church in our neighbourhood, Bokoro/Mavula, had disabled children!

What can we learn from ancient Congolese art?

All tribes have their arts. Traditional Congolese music is renowned for its variety of instruments, with the tam-tam being the most popular in its many forms. Other instruments include maracas, '*lokolé*' (a hollow tree trunk drum beaten with sticks), wind instruments, the scraper ('*mukwasa*' in Mai-Ndombe, a hollow bamboo with a hole scraped by another small stick or bamboo), the '*likembe*', also known as '*sanza*', a lamellaphone made of metal lamellas metal wooden box which influenced the Congolese modern rumba's guitar rhythm. Full songs and recitals are performed everywhere and often accompanied by dance, and each tribe has its style, which sometimes blends with neighbouring tribes', particularly after fishing and hunting seasons. Plastic arts include cult objects (fetishes and divinities), which are often in human form, as well as masks. Those objects were quickly appreciated and stolen by dishonest European collectors, who took these art objects back to Europe for private collections or museums. The Belgian Tervuren museum has the largest collection of Congolese art objects brought during the colonisation, while those masks were used in traditional ceremonies and dances to serve as mediators between humans on earth and the invisible and metaphysical world. The most famous of those masks are from the Tshokwe, Kuba, Songye, Kongo, Lele, Bembe and Luba tribes. One of the famous examples of African and Congolese ornamental art is the Kuba tribe tapestry made from raffia, which has geometric, harmonious, and designed motifs and figures.

What about the oral tradition and modern art?

Congolese culture is also rich in oral tradition, with variations in tales, proverbs, myths, fables and legends found among different tribes and ethnic groups. However, mythical figures such as ogres, spirits of the dead, impersonal spirits of nature and water genies or '*bilima*' in Lingala, specifically the famous '*Mamywata*' (Mamy Water, a powerful and complex water spirit depicted as a mermaid-like figure associated with both good fortune and potential danger), living under deep water. Congo is also a land of famous poets, novelists, filmmakers, painters, sculptors, philosophers, scientists and academicians, worldwide recognised and celebrated³⁴.

³⁴ Hulstaert, 1959 ; Colldén, L., 1979. In the Nkundo tribe, and among the Mongos in general, every elder must respond to a '*Losako*' greeting with a proverb: '*Bayale*' (everything passes; nothing is to be wondered; I am in control

What are some typical Congolese foods and dishes?

Certain foods and culinary habits are virtually common throughout the Congo: cassava flour (*'fufu'* in Lingala, *'luku'* in Kikongo, or *'bukari'* in Swahili, *'bukali'* in Tshiluba), cassava bread (*'kwanga'* in Lingala), palm oil, groundnut paste, cassava leaves (*'pondu'* in Lingala, *'saka-saka'* in Kikongo and *'sombe'* in Swahili, *'kaleji'* or *'matamba'* in Tshiluba) which is the most famous vegetable eaten all over the DRC, *'fumbwa'* leaves cooked with peanut pasta, *'kikalakasa'* vegetables with its proven nutritional properties (popularised by Professor Théophile Mbemba's research), and mashed plantain banana, or *'lituma'* in Lingala. Congolese also use special dishes cooked in wrapped leaves, *'liboke'* (plural: *'maboke'*) in Lingala, respectively in Lingala *'kwanga'*, *'fufu'*, *'mpondu'*, *'mwamba'*, and *'maboke'*, even if each tribe could have also its specific popular dishes and way of cooking cassava, for example. It's interesting that one tribe may eat something that another rejects, and that certain dishes, such as *'fumbwa'* vegetables cooked with groundnut paste, are quickly adopted by all. These culinary differences distinguish forest peoples from savannah dwellers and highlanders from those living by the river or on dry land. While some eat turtle or crocodile meat, others eat snakes, mushrooms and various insects. Of course, each person always had a few joints, herbs and leaves that they smoked, as well as alcoholic beverages

of the situation), *'Ototombe'* (let's go and move forward), *'Imo nyama asek'o ntolo'* (some animals have horns on their chest), *'Leke-leke se nzala'* (you'll always be hungry, even if you eat every day). An interesting area of research would be the compilation of all Congolese proverbs, along with all the variants from each tribe — it would be like an encyclopaedia. Some musicians, including the late Lutumba Simarro, excel at using and even inventing proverbs. This explains Felix Wazekwa's claim to use new, modern 'verbs' or proverbs, examples include: *'libanda ezali kati te'* (inside never equals outside); *'kokende liboso ezali kokoma te'* (going first is not synonymous with arriving safely); and *'tozali na système ya lifelo moto ezopela tozozika te'* (we live in a system close to hell, but fire burns and does not consume). Franck Lassan was a proverb champion who made a whole song out of them: *'Nsoso abotaka libata te'* (a hen cannot give birth to a duck), *'libumu ezali na matoyi te'* (the belly has no ears), *'matoyi elekaka moto te'* (ears are never longer than the head), *'mpongi nsoni na bokilo te'* (sleep is never ashamed of the presence of the mother or father-in-law (be careful when you behave!)), *'koba ekelelaka ndako te'* (the turtle can never be homeless).

such as beer brewed from sugar cane, bananas or palm wine extracted from palms or other oily plants.

How does a population like this remain united and unified?

Despite the Congolese mosaic of tribes and heterogeneous ethnic groups, the Congolese people are homogeneous. The Congo's cultural and geographical unity is achieved through and because of its river basin: the Congolese are a people of the Congo's basin who draw their waters from the river's sources, its confluent, tributaries, and major tributaries, which span all the provinces, in the Atlantic Ocean. The Congolese also share a common history made of ups and downs. Divided into ancient kingdoms and empires, they experienced the slave trade, welcomed and fought against Western exploration and the arrival of new religions. Suffering under Leopold II, they became Belgian Congolese through colonisation, which brought modern development in the form of new towns, schools, hospitals and paid jobs, and also contributed to and participated in the two world wars. Their shared history includes the assassination of Lumumba and the subsequent rebellions, Mobutu's coup d'état and the establishment of the one-party state, the '*Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution*' (MPR), the end of the one-party in 1990, the emergence of new rebellions with the AFDL and Joseph Kabila, the current Félix Tshisekedi regime, via stories of Congo's famous heroes such as Patrice Lumumba or soft power celebration: Mohamad Ali-George Foreman's 1974 boxing match in Kinshasa.

Sacredness and modesty

Some people are renowned for their legendary modesty; they are reserved when it comes to sexuality and sex, except during certain rituals, such as the Twins' Rituals. Others have no qualms about naming intimate body parts or talking about sexuality. However, there are religious and ritual occasions and ceremonies that break down this barrier, such as twins' rituals, and for some groups, including the Bolendo in the Oshwe region, obscene dances performed during the funeral ceremonies of young women and girls. Among the Ekonda (Mai-Ndombe), the most common exclamations when naming a woman's private parts are: 'Losoli e e e!' (clitoris) and 'Ntundu e e e!' (vagina). Similar exclamations are used around the world, such as 'putains' (French) and 'Fuck off!' (English).

Is the size of the DRC a real challenge?

The Congo's size is an opportunity to catch up. With a population of over 100 million, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a real market in terms of potential customers for any business, as is the capital city, Kinshasa, with over 20 million inhabitants. The populations of India and China also offer a labour market with cheaper labour. Any leader with good governance and a real vision of change could overcome the challenges posed by the Congo's size. The DRC is the second-largest country in Africa after Algeria, but it is smaller than the USA, Canada, and Russia.

Culturally, what does the DRC look like?

Culturally, the country is heterogeneous, with each tribe having its cultural particularity, but there is a common Congolese homogenous culture, referred to as the '*Congolitude*'³⁵, a neologism meaning the simple fact of being Congolese, the homogenous Congolese culture made of heterogeneous tribes and ethnic habits and puzzling traditions. This apparent mosaic of peoples and ethnic groups was and is interconnected through the basin of its Congo river, 4900 kilometres long, which takes its waters from Katanga, goes down to the formers Orientale and Equateur provinces, goes up to the capital Kinshasa via former Bandundu province where it is nourished with waters from Kasai and other rivers from the great Kasai in the centre of the country, and throws into the Atlantic Ocean, with a regular flow of 40,000 m³/second because of its position astride the equator. Its basin is a hub of waters, rivers, and streams, which amazed Henry Morton Stanley, the first to explore this river from source to mouth and who designed the first Congo map. This country is rich in natural resources, including copper, diamonds, zinc, iron, cobalt, manganese, uranium, and carbon used in computers and mobile phones. The relief is a large central basin plain covering Bandundu, Equateur, and Kasai provinces, while the plateaux are in the Congo Central and part of Katanga. There are

³⁵ Used, for the first time by Thierry Sinda, in his contribution : '*Jacques Rabemananjara : négritude ou malgachitude*': "Dans ce sens, effectivement, la négritude englobe la "Malgachitude" , la créolitude (ou créolité), la sénégalitude (ou sénégalité), la congolitude (ou congolité) etc. » (In this sense, indeed, negritude includes "Malagashitude", creolitude (or creoleness), senegalitude (or senegality), congolitude (or congolity) etc.), <https://africultures.com/jacques-rabemananjara-negritude-ou-malgachitude-3878/>, [Visited on 3rd February 2017].

mountain ranges, including the Rwenzori and its snow-caps and the active Nyiragongo volcano near Goma in the east. The country has an equatorial climate because the equator crosses the two provinces of Equateur and Province Orientale, and a temperate tropical climate with alternating short and long dry seasons. Its vegetation, tropical forests with the rarest and most protected animals, national parks, savannahs, and mountains make the Democratic Republic of the Congo a wonderful country with an 'epic history of a people'. The recent example of South Sudan, which is separated from Sudan, and that the former has been at war since gaining independence, but also that the latter is now in an incredible civil war with many casualties and deaths since the fall of their former dictator president, Bechir. The balkanisation of the Congo must be avoided, and it must never be an ideal scenario, solution or even approach that anyone could think of. This has already been attempted and failed in the years after the independence, with Moïse Tshombe and Albert Kalonji's respective secessions of Katanga and South Kasai provinces, and the Mulelists/Lumumbists 'Simba' rebellion occupied the entire eastern part of the country.

Congolese rumba music and dance

What about the Congolese rumba?³⁶

Congolese '**rumba**' music and dance culture is celebrated throughout the world. History teaches that, originally, the dance of the '*(n)kumba*' (navel), where the pair of male and female dancers rubbed their bellies to the rhythmic and regular sound of the tam-tam and other instruments, was brought to America with the slave trade. It was in Cuba where it mixed with European music and dances, particularly Spanish, adding modern instruments such as the guitar and wind instruments, and where, due to linguistic distortion, it became the '*rumba*', which gave rise to other black musical forms such as *salsa*, *merengue*, *bolero*, *pachanga*, and even *reggae* with its rhythmic and monotonous beats, and *jazz*. Cuban rumba was first presented at the festival in the United States during the Chicago World's Fair in 1933. Those music, sounds, and dance returned to the Congo via businessmen in 1920s-1930s, especially Greek, Portuguese, Belgian who brought recorded disks and gramophones and also by West Africans nicknamed '*Popo*' working on the Congo railway, in

³⁶ Stewart 2004, White 2008, Manda Tchebwa 1996, Nimy 2012.

administration and factories during the colonisation, and using guitars and dancing such as the '*maringa*', distorted in Lingala to '*malinga*' and meaning dance. During these interwar years, the expansion of Congolese cities encouraged a rural exodus, and once in the city, to strengthen their cultural ties, the Congolese would gather the weekends to celebrate and entertain themselves with folk songs that, because of the city, sometimes used modern instruments such as the accordion, the guitar, and especially the new square rhythmic tam-tam called '*patenge*', where the drummer syncopated the sound by rubbing it with a foot, the maracas and the traditional bamboo scraper called '*mukwasa/bokwasa*' in Mai-Ndombe. It was from this root that the first Congolese '**rumba precursors**' (as the rumba had not yet imposed its rhythm and tempo) emerged, who quickly began to copy these songs from records and play modern instruments. With each tribe and ethnic group having its own culture, music, dance, and artistic expression, this diversity becomes a source of inspiration and a reservoir for performance and skills enriched by borrowings from other countries and neighbouring peoples' music and dances, as musicians, dances, songs, rhythms, texts, and lyrics, like the Congolese culture itself, formed the Congolese rumba, a homogeneous music and dance of, and from, all these heterogeneous tribal and ethnic groups, which make its popularity and singularity.

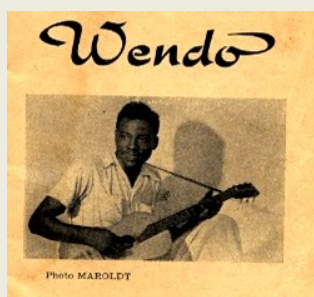
Schematically, how could this rumba history be described?

Surely through its stars, their songs and bands. The Congolese profusion and fragmentation of bands without end, causing dizziness for any outsider, mixing with the seasonal creation of dances, is evidence of the Congolese cultural heterogeneity. It is agreed that there are 5 generations of Congolese rumba on both sides of the river, Kinshasa (formerly Leopoldville) and Brazzaville. The first rumba generation (1920-1940), the precursor period, is called the '*Ancients (older) De Saio*', named after the guitarist De Saio Manoka. Very few of them, solitary musicians and instrumentalists, did not record their songs and had few bands: Odeon Kinois, whose headliner was Justin Disasi, the so-called American Band of Tshibangu, Martinican Band of Rufin Mutinga, and Melo Congo Band of Brazzaville by Emanuel Damango Dadet. The second generation (1940-1950), named '*Bakolo miziki*' (the music owners), and famously nicknamed the generation of '*Tango ya ba Wendo*' (the times of Antoine Wendo Nkalosoy), was launched by Paul

Kamba of Brazzaville, who founded the first rumba band in 1941, '*Victoria Brazza*', and his counterpart Antoine Wendo Nkalosoy, who traded his job as a sailor for the guitar, which he learned from the 'Popo' from Matadi and already famous for entertaining evenings during his boat trips on the river, and founded '*Victoria Leo*' in 1943. The latter song '*Victoria apiki drapeau*' (Victoria has raised its flag in Brazzaville and Leopoldville). His fame came with the 1948's recording of the first hit of Congolese modern rumba, '*Marie-Louise*', in a duet with Henry Bowane, where they popularised the '*seben*' (a distortion of the English '*seven*'): the second part of the rumba song where the full chorus at the beginning gives way to the performance of instruments, including the guitar, and where music lovers indulge in the enchanting dance steps, a score respected to this day. The Congolese have thus developed a virtuosic way of strumming and playing the guitar by inventing scores, mixing rhythms, string plucking, and a creativity that will take your breath away. It was the time of studios, whose owners were Greek, Jewish, and Belgian businessmen in Congo: Ngoma of Jeronimidis, Opika, Radio Congolia, Olympiade, Esengo, Loningisa, CEFA, etc., hiring musicians and paying them in proportion to their talents and of famous pubs such as Chez Siluvangi and Chez Congo Bar. Two other soloists were Adou Elenga³⁷ and Baudouin Mavula, and their respective flagship songs: '*Ata Ndele mokili ekobaluka*' (sooner or later the world will

³⁷ From its earliest days, rumba has been a tool and a channel for Congolese politics and society, singing and dancing about them and, in turn, being inspired by them. One might say that it is driven by the rhythm of the seasons and events. Adou Elenga pioneered the patriotic song genre with his composition (https://youtu.be/hWl3HgQ4Gwk?si=NfN6zoJ26_A2WrIs) '*Ata ndele mokili ekobaluka*' (Sooner or later, the world will change), which was banned shortly after its release. The song foreshadowed independence with its lyrics: '*Ata ndele, mokili mokoziwana; ata ndela, mondele akokende; moto moindo akokamba*' (Sooner or later, things will become clear; the white man will return home; the black man will take power). And then came the 'Indépendance cha-cha' band with their songs. Many songs also glorify Patrice Lumumba and Mobutu; his new regime made Franco Luambo and Pascal Tabu Ley his griots par excellence. Subsequent Kabila's and Tshisekedi regimes did not become heavily involved in been glorified by the rumba, even though Rumba also sang about them. Examples include '*Tobunda mpo na Ekolo*' and '*Mwana Mpwo*', which were used to mobilise against the war and the Rwandan invasion that began on 2 August 1998 and 'Franc Congolais' celebrating the new currency both composed by Suzi Kaseya.

change), the first patriotic and anti-colonialist song, and '*Makwa Ndungu*'. This is the foundation of classical rumba, whose tempo is respected to this day. The most celebrated are Bukasa, d'Oliveira, Jean-Bosco Mwenda wa Bayeke, Munyanya, known as Roitelet, the accordionist Ferruzzi Camile, Jimmy Elenga, who honed his musical talents learnt at the Minor Seminary of Bokoro in Mai-Ndombe, where he played the harmonium and learnt music theory, returned to Brazzaville and moved to Léopoldville, learnt and played a specific new guitar's style, whose rhythm is still played to this day, hence his nickname, Jimmy of the Hawaiian, before returning to die in his native Bangui, in Central African Republic.



Antoine Nkalosoy



Abeti Masikini Finant

And then came the third rumba's generation.

It is the generation launched with the founding in 1953 of the band African Jazz by Joseph Kabasele, known as Grand Kalle, a former Catholic chorister, who adopted the rumba style known as '*fiesta*': a rumba close to and copying the Afro-Cuban style where the voices and instruments are well alternated and mixed like in polyphony and where the rhythm of the rumba is syncopated in two beats. This rumba school was followed by the '*rumba odemba*' by the OK Jazz band, founded in 1956 by Franco Luambo and his companions, some of whom were from Brazzaville. It is street rumba, almost vulgar, a collection of social themes where the rhythm and the sound of the tam-tam take precedence over everything, and where full songs sometimes alternate with lyrics, jests, and gossip. The rhythm seems to be recto-tono, unlike the pentatonic and undulating fiesta style. The two schools of rumba continue to this day, alternating and converging. Rumba fiesta with

Nico Kasanda, known as Doctor Nico the sorcerer of the guitar (African Fiesta Sukisa), Pascal Tabu Ley (African Fiesta National, famous for having played for several days at the Olympia in Paris, for introducing the drums into rumba and especially the dancers, later becoming Afriza International), Jeannot Bombenga (the last survivor), all defectors from African Jazz, Negro Succès of Siongo Bavon Marie-Marie, Kofi Olomide and his Quartier Latin band, Fally Ipupa, Herve Ferre Gola, etc. while Odemba is embodied by Johnny Bokelo, Bana OK (defectors from OK Jazz after the death of Franco Luambo, known as the Grand Master and sorcerer of the guitar) under the direction of Simon Lutumba Ndomanmano, Le Karmapa, etc.

How can we understand and explain the close and parallel evolution of this two-sided Congolese rumba?

Culturally, the same tribe of people live on both banks of the same Congo River. And, any social and political change on one side impacts the other. Some people sleep in Brazzaville and get up the next day in Kinshasa. And, Rumba music and dance become a bridge. Bands musicians are recruiting from one side to another. “*Ebale ya Congo, ejali lopango te, ejali se nzela*” (the Congo river is not a gate, it is a pathway), a famous Rumba song states.

Politically, how did the Rumba tie with the social-political evolution?

Since the rumba’s first development years, music and musicians have usually and most often praised politicians and politics, who in turn rewarded the former with hard cash. It’s a perfect partnership, but, as with any partnership, there are ups and downs. Sometimes the musicians honour the politicians, and sometimes they rebuff them, becoming a force of opposition and siding with the people when the politicians go off the rails. One of this perfect partnership was with the independence when rumba was present in Brussels during the Belgian-Congolese political Round Table of January-February 1960 and the release of patriotic songs such as ‘*Indépendance cha-cha*’, ‘*Table ronde*’ (Jef Kalle), and later ‘*Congo se ya biso*’ (Edo Clary Lutula), etc., while love, ‘*bolingo*’, the central theme of rumba whose preferred language became Lingala, was depicted in works like ‘*Africa mokili mobimba*’ (Charles Déchaux Mwamba), ‘*Jamais Kolonga*’ (Tino Baroza), ‘*Naweli boboto*’ (Vicky Longomba, the king of ‘rumba Boléro’, introducing and breaking the monotonous rhythmic rumba). It was the continuation of the marriage and divorce between rumba and the socio-political evolution of the two Congos,

starting with Adou Elenga and his *'Ata Ndele'* (Sooner or later) from 1955, and continuing with all the songs about Lumumba and the Congo's troubled years (1960-1965), the MPR, and the new Mobutu regime, especially *'Nzambe, nakomitunaka'* (Verckys Kiamuangana), and Frankin Boukaka of Brazzaville and his opus *'Bucheron'*, *'Les immortels'*, *'Pont sur le Congo'*. During the dictatorships and single-party rule in the two Congos, musicians became champions of these regimes. When democracy returned in the 1990s, these same musicians became its griots or troubadours, just as they had been during the years of wars and rebellions.



Manu Dibango, Nico Kasanda, Roger Izeidi and Tabu Ley Pascal



The "Trio Madjesi": Mario, Djeskain and Sinatra aka Saak Sakul

Let us continue with the chronological evolution.

This third rumba's generation is the years of famous singers and instrumentalists, including renowned guitarists Tino Baroza, Nico Kasanda wa Mikalay, Mwamba Déchaux Charles, Luambo Franco, Bokelo Isenge and his band Conga Succès with his famous *'Mwambe'*, the only rumba song to have known 11 versions, all students of Jimmy de la Hawaïenne and the Belgian Bill Alexandre who introduced the electric guitar into rumba. Congolese guitar performance benefited from the tones of the *'Likembe'*, an African lamellophone with metal blades fixed to a wooden sound box, played with the thumbs to produce melodious sounds, hence the special way the rumba guitar blends with the piano notes quickly played as if counting the guitar strings, one by one. On returning from the Brussels Round Table, Jef Kalle brought back the Cameroonian Manu Dibango, a renowned pianist and saxophonist who also added his touch to the rumba before flying back to his native Douala with Congolese musicians for his band, which benefited

from the addition of rumba. Especially since the song '*Independance cha cha*' became the anthem of African independence, broadcast on all the world's radios.

When did the first evolution or revolution of the rumba occur?

It happened with the fourth rumba generation, known as the Zaiko one. The first evolution will come with the introduction of the '*sou-kouss*' dance around the 1970s, a more rhythmic and faster rumba (Tabu Ley's song 'Tonton Skol'). During those years, world music was dominated by James Brown and the American funk and soul music, which was quickly copied by the rumba, specifically the Trio Madjesi (Mario from Angola, Djeskain from Congo-Brazzaville, and Sinatra, also known as Saak Sakul, from Kinshasa) band Sosoliso and their dance 'bidunda-dunda'. Rumba benefited from the Congolese students in Belgium known as '*Belgicains*', who had two bands in Belgium: Los Nickelos and Les Yeye National. When on holidays in Kinshasa in the 1970s, they inspired the creation of the band Bel Guide National and especially Thu Zaina, which revolutionised the rumba. On 24 December 1969, DV Moanda, Henri Mongombe, Marcellin Delo, and André Bitu decided to create Zaiko Langa-Langa from the ashes of Bel Guide. The first musicians they recruited were the guitarist Manuaku Pepe Felly and the singer Jules Shungu, aka Papa Wemba, joined by Nyoka Longo Jossart and the others. It was a spectacular evolution, especially as they invented and introduced popular funk dances and the new rhythm: 'Cavacha'. They soon introduce new dances for each of their new season song. The 1970s are the Zaiko years when rumba became the music of the youth who abandoned the two-step, two-beat rumba style, keeping the first part of the song to 5 minutes, and dedicating the second part of 5 minutes to the 'sebene' non-stop, inherited from 'Tango ya Bawendo'.

What about Zaiko?

Zaiko is the standard-bearer of the four generation of Rumba where dislocated bands, invented dances and new talented musicians and performers follow one another: Zaiko Langa-Langa with Nyoka Longo, Papa Wemba, Mbuta Mashakado, Evoloko Anto, Lengi Lenga, Bozi Boziana, the guitarists Pepe Felly Manuaku, Mbuta Matimba, Beniko Popolipo, Bongo Wende, Huit Kilos, the drummer Ilo Pablo Bakunde; the Stukas Boys band of the showman Lita Bembo and his friend Lomongo Alida; Isifi of Papa Wemba, Evoloko, Bozy Boziana; Viva la Musica of Papa Wemba; Zaiko Wawa of Manuaku; Choc Stars of Ben Nyamabo; Anti-Choc of Bozi

Boziana; Langa-Langa Stars of Evoloko aka Jocker defector from Zaiko; Big Stars of Defao Matumona; Victoria of Emeneya Kester who will revolutionise rumba with the introduction of Computer-Assisted Music and the use of the synthesiser as an integral instrument of rumba; Empire Bakuba of Pepe Kalle Kabasele Yampanya, Papi Tex Matolu, and Dilu Dilomona; Bella-Bella of the Soki brothers; etc. The uniqueness of this generation is in its ability to create various dances: Mukonyonyo, Caneton, Choque, Sous Marin, Rumba Rock, Pompe Kijection, Mayeno, Kavacha, Tshaku Bimbondass, Kiwazenza, Isankele, etc. It is also the period of solo artists like Gerard Madiata, Franck Lissan, Nyboma, etc. and also the use of traditional rhythms such as the introduction of the famous Mutshwashi of the Baluba with Tshiala Mwana Elisabeth, multiple versions of Baluba's song 'Kamulangu', the Mongo folklore popularised and modernised by Boketsu and his Swede-Swede and their Sundama dance, the female celebrities Abeti Masikini Fina, Mbilia Bel Mboyo who became the headliner at Afrisa International, Mpongo Love, following in the footsteps of the second generation like Lucie Eyanga whose hits are still being covered, in short, it is a modern and modernised rumba, while Tabu Ley and his Afriza and Franco Luambo and his OK Jazz continue to embody their two schools and Verckys Kiamuangana ventures into local musical production supporting young musicians with his studios and music equipment. The Zaiko school is still famous to this day, embodied by Jossart Nyoka Longo, who has never played in another band and symbolises unparalleled musical stability in rumba. With this fourth generation, rumba becomes improvisation, gymnastics, movement, a show, an atmosphere, a game of legs, branded by the introduction of the so-called 'Atalaku' by Zaiko Langa-Langa: singers whose job is to shout and invite to dance in multiple phases, their shouts and movements thus help to change from one step or cadence to another.

Then, the transition occurred in the 1990s.

With the evolution of music worldwide, including Kassav and Zouk Machine and their Zouk, which became popular in Africa where they performed in stadiums, not only does Emeneya Kester innovate with his song '*Nzinsi*' by introducing those Zouk bits and especially the computer and synthesiser now part of the band's equipment, but the young Gathò Beveans copied Michael Jackson and also recorded classical rumba songs, while Kanda Bongo Man

in the diaspora calms the rumba song with pieces of less than ten minutes made them easily memorable and leaving especially rooms for dance, by those years the trendy Kwasa-Kwasa. Pepe Kalle and his Empire Bakuba inaugurate the rumba tempo and rhythm with the song '*Po Moun Papa Bougé*', a rock and soul improvisation song in the studio where, from beginning to end, a rhythmic rumba 'seben' is offered with several dance movements regulated by an 'Atalaku': this is the birth of what is called the rumba music: the generic. From then on, any first song of a rumba album becomes a 'generic', whose name is also of the album, making dancing from the beginning until the end. It was launched by Kanda Bongo Man in his song 'Moni', and immediately copied by Pepe Kalle and his Empire Bakuba who recorded 'Po Moun Paka Bouge', and adopted later by all the musicians and bands of the two Congos' rumba as they changed Rumba's songs to make them less than 10 minutes. As Emeneya Kester and his Victoria abandoned the Zaiko-Viva style for his new Nzinzi's one, the void was quickly filled by the young of a new band, Wenge Musica, who adopted and modernised the Zaiko music genre and style introduced by a well-performed the so-called 'generic': the success is total and Wenge Musica inaugurated the fifth rumba generation to this day, whose leading figures are Ngiamia Noel aka Werrason, Jean-Bedel Mpiana, the guitarists Alain Makaba and Didier Masela. Wenge Musica was later dislocated in Werrason's Wenge Musica Maison-Mere and JB Mpiana's Wenge BCBG. Wenge Musica resumed and modernised the Zaiko innovation of the '*Atalaku*': musicians whose role is to improvise musical rallying, shouting and rhythm changes during a generic or a song's 'sebene'. Among the Wenge, the 'Atalaku' became the 'animateurs' (animators) and masters of the 'generics'. Wenge's first animator, Tutu Kaludji, wisely and technically copied '*ndombolo*'s singing shouted strophe from Radja Kula and his Station Japan band, and transformed it to become both a dance and a music style embodying this fifth generation of rumba until then.

Are there some outsiders or free electrons?

Numerous. Reddy Amisi Bailo Canto from Viva la Musica of Papa Wemba, reconnected with the '*rumba fiesta*' style with songs, famously appreciated because of their lyrics, Samuel aka Sam-Mangwana, the last custodian of '*rumba odemba*', the diaspora with Abeti Masikini, the ladies including Mbilia Bel after a stint with Afrisa of Tabu Ley, Mpongo Love who died very young, the guitarists

and instrumentalists like pianist Ray Lema, Lokwa Kanza and Mike Munan, Souzi Kaseya the ultimate arranger who innovated with the style adopted in Evoloko's song 'Mbonge', Awilo Longomba, a defector from Viva la Musica of Papa Wemba and its rumba non-stop show, the iconic Koffi Olomide Antoine who remains probably the most contributor is making musicians to be paid from his job as he knows intelligently negotiating performance contract in his advantage and opened the door and inspired his young colleagues who became financially stabler than their elders. Since Tabu Ley Rochereau Pascal's 1970s Paris Olympia performance, Congolese rumba has conquered renowned venues like Olympia, Zenith, Bercy, La Madeleine, and stadiums such as Kinshasa's Kamanyola, now Stade des Martyrs, musically inaugurated by Kester Emeneya. The solo styles like Zap Maman, Jean Goubal Kalala, who returns to musical fundamentals, Felix Wazekwa, the 'verbist' or the successor to the wise poet Simarro Lutumba, not to mention the offshoots like Bobongo Stars, the Petits Chanteurs de Kenge, and Chem-Chem Yetu, solo albums like those of Papa Noel Ndule, Simarro Massiya, voices like Josky Kiambukuta, Ntesa Daliens, Mujos Mulamba, Djo Mpoy, Ndombe Opetum Pepe, Lassa Carlito, Dido Yoko, etc, remain rumba's monuments. In Brazzaville, it was mainly the Bantous de la Capitale band and musicians like Youlou Mabiala, Pierre Moutari, Theo Koukou, Pamelou Munka, Michel Boibanda, and especially the new generation, who copied Wenge Musica, such as the Extra Musica band with Roga-Roga, who are the masterpieces of this river's banks rumba. This fifth generation of rumba is also known for using lyricists who offer songs to musicians without being mentioned or even financially compensated, such as Pascal Poba, who provided his works to Wenge Musica musicians and even to Papa Wemba.

Congolese Regional Languages: Lingala, Kikongo, Kiswahili and Ki(Tshi)luba

So, what are the main languages spoken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

With nine bordering countries where some of its populations can be found as a result of colonial borders, the Congolese are divided into four regional languages, some of them using by those neighbouring countries: **Lingala** is spoken in almost every town,

including Kinshasa, Equateur, the western part of the former province of Orientale, and Mai-Ndombe, and has long been the language of the army and music; **Kikongo** used in Kwilu-Kwango and the Province of Central Congo; while **Tshiluba** is spoken in Grand Kasai and **Kiswahili** in the east of Province Orientale, Maniema, North and South Kivu, and the Province of Katanga. For example, Lingala is spoken in the Republic of the Congo-Brazzaville and even in the Central African Republic, where the Sango language is similar to the northern Congo language, the two countries sharing the same tribes and peoples, and the Ubangi River, which forms the border between them, is like a bridge connecting brothers and sisters on either side. Kikongo is spoken in northern Angola, in Congo-Brazzaville, where it is known as '*Munu Kutuba*', and '*Kikongo ya Leta*' (administrative Kikongo) in the DRC Bandundu province, and '*Kikongo ya Bula Matadi*' in the DRC's Congo Central province. Swahili, a language that Arab slave traders had spread and spoken throughout East Africa, is a little different from the DR Congo's Swahili, which is less grammatically correct than that spoken in Tanzania, for example, which is referred to as '*Swahili bora*'.

What about the Congolese diaspora? Was, and is, it also involved in Congolese rumba?

The diaspora also performs rumba copied from all the rumba generations' styles, mixing them with the world's rap and slam, and without forgetting the classical rumba and 'seben'. The first Congolese diaspora to adopt and play rumba were Congolese students in Belgium at around the sixties-seventies — known as Belgicains — who founded two orchestras, Los Nickelos and Les Yeye National, to facilitate socialising. They did this alongside their studies. These orchestras produced talented musicians and instrumentalists, including the songwriter Max Mongali, who composed numerous songs performed by renowned musicians, such as '*Etape*' Nyoka Longo interpreted. One of his famous songs is '*Lombonga*', a revolutionary song in which he sings about Patrice Lumumba and all the revolutionaries and revolutions of the world.

What are the characteristics of the fifth rumba generation?

It is mainly known and famous for its practice of the '*generic*' and '*mabanga*' or stones in Lingala or dedications: the names of occasional patrons, sponsors or godfathers paying cash for their names, nicknames and forged sobriquets mentioned and enumerated in a song: the so-called Serge Kasanda is said to be the 'IMF', Musheni

is the ‘Code ya Mboka’ (country’s telephone code), Patrick Bolonya is the ‘Eighth Wonder of the World’, Adam Bombole, ‘the Great Saudi’ who doesn’t care about the rise or fall of the dollar, etc. And, to make his arts much more attractive, the rumba musicians adopted the so-called ‘SAPE’ culture: wearing expensive marked clothes and shoes and knowing how to mix colourful and attractive designs, most of the time, to be and seem as a unique model.

The rise of Lingala

Could Lingala, the Congolese *lingua franca*, be analysed to identify the features that distinguish and enrich it?

Lingala is the Congolese *lingua franca*: the most widely spoken language. It is derived from the language of the Banunu-Bobangi tribes living in the Lukulela region, where the Congo and Ubangui rivers converge, in the south-west of Equateur province. Since ancient times, they have traded along the river to the Atlantic Ocean, selling mainly ivory and other goods, and bringing back manufactured commodities from the coast. As it mixed with others, their language became a new *lingua franca*. In 1888, the Catholic Scheutist Fathers arrived to evangelise the Congo and settled in the parish of Berge-Sainte-Marie, opposite Kwamouth, and later moved to establish the parish of Mankanza Saint Pierre-Claver, Nouvelle Anvers, at the former’s Henry Morton Stanley Bangala station, where they adopted and popularised Lingala as their new evangelisation language. The Belgian Father Eugène de Boeck, a deputy headmaster who later became the Bishop of Nouvelle Anvers, made Lingala easier to learn with easy grammar, lexicology, and pronunciation. While ‘*Kikongo ya Bula-matadi*’ (of Bula-matari) was and is used in the DRC’s Congo Central province, ‘*Kikongo ya Leta*’ in DRC’s Kwilu and Kwango provinces, and ‘Kikongo’, said ‘*Munu Kutuba*’, is spoken in Congo Brazzaville. All three are variants. The Scheutists who settled in Leopoldville, where Father Eugene Calon founded the city’s first Catholic parish, St-Leopold, in 1902, shifted the capital’s language from Kikongo, by then the most widely spoken language used by administrators and missionaries, to Lingala, which rapidly spread as it also became the army’s language. Hence the existence of several forms of Lingala: the missionaries’ *Lingala ya Mankanza* (Mankanza Lingala), or literary Lingala, which uses exact and proper vocabularies such as

'*gbagba*' for bridge, '*engbunduka*' for train, etc, and respects chords, as opposed to Kinshasa or modern Lingala, which uses foreign language words and disregards grammar rules. The late Professor Thomas d'Aquin Kawata Ashem Tem's 'Bago' is the latest Lingala masterpiece dictionary (Kawata 2014). Brazzaville's Lingala also has its particular pronunciation, as does '*Indubil*', or the underworld of Kinshasa's Lingala, which has its own forged words. According to Professor Ndolamb Ngokwey's *The cultural globalisation of the DR Congo* (Ngokwey, 2025), the use of foreign words in Congolese languages, specifically Lingala, is an evidence of globalisation's 'hybridisation': the Lingala words '*aza danger*', '*mystique*', '*se retrouver*', '*charisme*', and '*boule*' differ from their original French counterparts meaning '*ingenious, cool, prosperous*', '*strange*' or '*complicated*', '*to find one's bearings*', '*reserved attitude and elegant dress*', and '*idea, reasoning, reflection*'. Words have also been borrowed from Portuguese (*mesa, manteka, sapatu, loso, makayabu, bendele* and *kopo*), English (*bulanketi, buku, miliki, and kabadi*), Arabic (*safari, sanduku, malaika* and *habari*) and French (*fami, dipanda, feti, popi* and *lopitalo*). There are also slight differences in certain words between Catholic and Protestant Lingala: the Catholics' '*azali*', '*Nzambe*', and '*mukristu*' become '*ajali*' ('*he is*'), '*Njambe*' ('*God*') and '*muklisto*' ('*Christian*') for the Protestants. The Congolese languages and dialects have all benefited from missionaries: they translated the Bible into these languages, transcribing them and enriching their vocabulary with new words. The same analysis also concerns the other Congolese languages.

What about the French language?

French is the DRC's official language, a vestige of Belgian colonisation, as the Belgian colonial establishment was the Walloons, who imposed French. So, by definition, each Congolese speaks his tribal language, which may also be his mother tongue. He may also speak one, two or all of the regional languages, as well as French, if he attended school. Now, due to globalisation, many Congolese also speak English and other languages, including Chinese.

First Congo contact with the West: the Slave Trade

How did the Congolese first make contact with Europe?

After their King João II of Portugal commissioned his explorers to move further the southern hemisphere of Africa, the Portuguese **Di-ego Cao** (Diogo Cão: 1452–1486), sailing along the west coast of

Africa with his three caravels, was attracted by a strong current draining turbid waters filled with weeds and plant debris for several kilometres, which pushed his caravels back into the open sea. Upon landing, he discovered the mouth of a river, which he named the Zaze or Zaire — a mishearing of the natives' Kikongo-speaking 'Nzadi' (great river). This was in August 1482. Cao erected a stele on the left bank of the river, opposite Banana, at 'São António do Zaire'. Becoming the first European to reach this part of Africa, he sailed up the river, past the '*Cauldron of Hell*' (Chaudrons d'enfer in French) — the great whirlpool below Matadi — and reached the cataracts. Near the Yellalla Falls, above the town of Matadi, he carved an inscription in stone to mark his passage: '*Here arrived the ships of the very enlightened King John II of Portugal — Diogo Cao, Pero Anes and Pero da Costa*'.

As it was not an empty territory, who was living there and who was ruling it?

This territory belonged to the Kongo Kingdom, which the natives called '*Kongo dia Nttila*' or '*Wene wa Kongo*' in Kikongo, a well-governed kingdom, whose king bore the title of '*Mani Kongo*' and whose capital city was Mbanza Kongo. Currently divided between Angola, where the former capital Mbanza Kongo is located, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Congo-Brazzaville, the Kongo Kingdom, was founded in 1390 by Nimi a Lukeni, who also established Mbanza Kongo as his capital, and made it a tradition for the kingdom's ruler to take the title of '*Mani Kongo*,' the Portuguese version of the Kongo title '*Mwene Kongo*,' meaning '*lord or ruler of the Kongo kingdom*.' Diego Cao returned to Portugal with some Kongolese as evidence to his king, who had previously launched worldwide maritime explorations for new lands. After some months, Cao brought them back and, as they told about their Portuguese wonders experiences, Mani Kongo launched diplomatic ties with Portugal and welcomed businessmen and Catholic missionaries who Christianized the Kongolese, built schools, hospitals, and churches, and initiated trade with the West. The Kongo Kingdom also established diplomatic ties with the Holy See. Nzinga-a-Nkuwu was the Mani Kongo who welcomed Diego Cao.

What needs to be known about the Kongo Kingdom's first contact with Europe, and what impact did this have?

Nzinga a Nkuwu was baptised on 3 May 1491 and changed his name to João I (Ndo Nzuawu in Kikongo), referring to himself as

the Portuguese King's equal and claiming to be his brother, also his son, Prince Mvemba a Nzinga, who also adopted the Christian name of Afonso I. It was a peaceful and amicable period between the Holy See, Portugal, and the Kongo Kingdom. Afonso I's son was later baptised Henrique and became a Catholic priest and bishop. Kongolese changed their African names to Portuguese ones and their capital, Mbanza Kongo, to San Salvador (*The Saint Saviour*). As a result of the Kongolese Catholic conversions, the Apostolic Prefecture of Kongo was created in 1645, entrusted to the Italian Capuchins, with its headquarters in the north of present-day Angola, at Mbanza Kongo and, in 1604, Mani Kongo Alvaro III sent his ambassador to the Holy See (to denounce Portugal's involvement in the Slave Trade?): Antonio Emanuele Nsaku Ne Vunda³⁸. However, the slave trade ruined this Kongolese-European friendship. As Europe turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to Mani Kongo's claims and warnings to the Portuguese King, Mani Kongo expelled the Catholic priests and reverted to their ancestral practices and beliefs. Unfortunately, it was too late. In the battle of Ambuila, on 29 October 1665, the Portuguese defeated the Kongolese and destroyed the kingdom. Dona Beatriz Kimpa Vita Nsimba³⁹ (1684-1706), also referred to

³⁸ In a historical novel, *Un océan, deux mers, trois continents* (Mémoire d'émigré, 2018), Wilfred N'Sonde recalls this story. The Kongolese priest (in the novel) travelled in a Congo-Brazil-Portugal-Spain route slave trade ship, after stopovers to load cargo with slaves, he witnessed their mistreatments and revolts and arrived in Rome on January 1608; ill, received the last rites from Pope Paul V, died on 6 January 1608 and was buried in the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

³⁹ Among the Black and African messianisms preaching a Black God and Jesus to liberate Africa and grant independence are: Simon Kimbangu, born in 1887 and baptised by the Baptists, their catechist in 1915, claimed had a divine vision, he was arrested and sentenced, died in Elisabethville prison in 1951, and in 1959, his sons Diangenda took the leadership and founded the Kimbanguism Church '*Eglise de Jésus-Christ sur la terre par le Prophète Simon Kimbangu*' (EJCSK)/the *Church of Jesus-Christ on Earth by his Prophet Simon Kimbangu*, with the city of Nkamba as their new Jerusalem; the church now divided in two branches after the death of the last Simon Kimbangu son, Dialungana Kingani; *Bundu dia Kongo* (BDK) church, also known as the Gathering of Kongo, was founded by Zacharie Badiengila (also known as Ne Muanda Nsemi) who claimed to be the heir of Kimpa Vita and Kimbangu, and like Muslims who preach only in Arabic and Catholics who used to preach only in Latin, the BDK used only Kikongo, the language of their sacred book 'Makomo' (meaning 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' in Kikongo) which research

as Beatrice of Congo, a Catholic princess who claimed to have St Anthony of Padua's revelation in 1703-1704 and founded the Antonine movement, preached a return to Christianity, recognised the papal primate but was hostile to the missionaries, launched the kingdom reconstruction, declared that Jesus is a Kongolesé, called the Kongolesé to stop serving Portuguese who enslave them. She was burned alive in 1706 and became the root of the Kongolesé and African Messianism.

What led to the breakdown of the friendship between Portugal and the Kongo Kingdom?

Despite bringing Christianity and Islam to Africa, Europeans and Arabs later launched the slave trade, which had devastated the Kongo Kingdom and present-day Angola, Congo Kinshasa, Congo Brazzaville and the entire black Africa. As early as the 9th century, the Arabs began the inhumane trade of kidnapping Africans and selling them as slaves to wealthy Arabs. Then, the Europeans, after their navigator Christopher Columbus accidentally docked on the Caribbean island in 1492 while searching for a new route from Europe to India, began migrating *en masse* to the New World, which is now America, and colonised it. As they needed labour for exploiting those lands, they organised caravan raids and razzias in Africa, kidnapping black men, women and children. They captured and made them walk, chained, to coastal transit markets via two routes to sell them in America: the western route via the Atlantic Ocean, the eastern via the Indian Ocean. On this route, the Africans passed through '*Doors of no return*', such as at Gorée, a tiny island off the coast of Dakar in Senegal, which has a symbolic museum called the '*House of Slaves*'. They were then loaded onto ships and sold in those American slave markets, numbered, having lost their African names. To prevent revolts, those from the same tribe and family

reveals to be Ne Muanda Nsemi, a chemist who studied in Europe, translation of introductions to Rosicrucian and Freemasonic theories, and also BDK followers believe that the palm nuts carried by their guards they called 'Makesa', turn into bullets when they are attacked. In eastern Congo, for example, the Kitawala, a deformation of 'Watch Tower'; for example, Pastor Jacob Mpankia, among the Basakata of Mai-Ndombe in those years, inspired by Kinbanguism, established the '*Eglise Baptiste d'Esprit de Vérité*' (EBEV/Kintwadi), etc. In the Republic of the Congo, André Matswa (1899–1942) is considered a divine prophet sent by God to liberate Brazzaville from the French, and Pastor Frédéric Ntumi Bintsamou. They are all new gurus.

were separated so that they could not communicate in their language and needed to learn the master's language. Europeans launched the "*triangular trade*": they would travel to Africa, kidnap black people and transport them on commercial ships to America, where they were sold as slaves to work for the Europeans in their sugarcane, tobacco, cotton, fruit trees' plantations, and minerals exploitations, and the profits were sent back to Europe.



Gorée Island's House of Slaves, with its "Door of No Return" at the end of the corridor below, out of which slaves were loaded onto ships bound for the Americas

Has this inhumane trade harmed the lives of Africans?

Africa lost its population: its young, strong and brilliant men; its nubile and wealthy women. The exact number seems to be higher than is generally accepted: perhaps 100 million Africans were sold to America. Yet nobody seems willing to take responsibility for this, or to pay the price. They were kidnapped and chained up on the coast before being boarded for America. Some died *en route* because of the inhuman conditions, while others rebelled by jumping overboard. Mani Kongo, one of the first kingdoms to welcome the West, sent a letter of complaint to the King of Portugal, pleading with him to stop involving his people in such inhumane practices. However, the Portuguese and Europeans never considered his concerns. The Congolese and other Africans resisted and rebelled against the well-

organised invaders armed with firearms. Unfortunately, the Portuguese and Europeans invaded and destroyed the Kongo Kingdom. At the start of the seventeenth century, the shameful slave trade spread in Africa via two routes: the Europeans led the western route from the African hinterland to America via the Atlantic coast, while the Arabs led the eastern route via the Indian Ocean.

But what about the African chiefs and intermediaries who collaborated with Western traders?

There were a few Africans who collaborated with these invaders. But, the slave trade and the colonisation a century after were the West's business, and never Africa's. They are the ones who need and must be held accountable for that inhumane trade. Monarchs, royalty and wealthy European families planned and financed the slave trade, and the Catholic Church even blessed it. On 16 June 1452, Pope Nicholas V issued a brief authorising the King of Portugal, Alfonso V, and other European monarchs to enslave non-Christians in conquered African territories. This legitimised the beginnings of the European slave trade from a theological perspective. On 8 January 1454, the same Pope issued the bull *Romanus Pontifex*, which he publicly read in Lisbon in October 1455. This document authorised the enslavement of "infidel" Africans, who were considered enemies of Christ, and provided a theological basis for slavery and the slave trade. Pope Francis finally repealed this Church's 'doctrine of discovery' in 2023. An example of legislation relating to the slave trade is the famous '**Code Noir**' in France, which provided a legal framework for slavery in the West Indies. The first version was drafted by Minister Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1616–1683) and enacted by the French king Louis XIV in 1685, while King Louis XV enacted the second version in 1724. Copied by other colonialists, it stated that '*all slaves in our islands shall be baptised and instructed in the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion*', as well as declaring that black slaves were '*furniture*', an object that could be acquired by a master in the same way as property. It was Westerners, not Africans, who profited greatly from the slave trade. Some slave traders did form partnerships with African merchants and chiefs, selling their subjects as well as those under their protection. However, the slave trade essentially involved Europeans kidnapping Africans and transporting them to be sold in America, and the profit allowed them to buy commodities from America for Europe. The kidnapped were chained, attached

and required to walk long distances before reaching the coasts and boarding specially designed ships. A Congolese proverb cautions against comparing the waters of a small stream to those of a river. You can't reverse roles and responsibilities. Millions of Africans perished due to the unsanitary conditions on those ships, as merchants prioritised profit over the well-being of their cargo. As the hygienic conditions deteriorated, Africans suffocated, and those who resisted and revolted were either killed or thrown overboard. When in America, Africans were sold and dispersed to prevent groups from the same area and speaking the same language from gathering. This had a devastating impact on Africa, destroying families and communities, and leading to a decrease in population as people fled to the deep forests, where they were exposed to tropical diseases and wild animals.

Was the slave trade an inhumane business?

Without a doubt. First, the Arabs, which is not very often mentioned or which seems forgotten, and then the Europeans invaded, organised raids, arrested, kidnapped, and decimated populations and burned villages. They chained up women, children and men, bringing them to the human markets on the coast of the Atlantic or Indian Oceans via the island of Zanzibar. European slave traders docked their ships in Africa to purchase Africans as commodities, scrutinising their prices and quality. They then transported the Africans across the Atlantic and sold them as slaves to work on the plantations of wealthy Europeans who had invaded and settled in America, also known as the New World. These Europeans had also expelled the original indigenous Amerindian occupants from their territories. This trade, known as the 'triangular trade', benefited entire European families, and led to the development of port cities such as Nantes, Bristol, Liverpool, Bordeaux, La Rochelle and Rouen, among others. Some traditional chiefs and indigenous Africans collaborated with the traders. However, the vast majority of Africans and kings, whose primary function was to protect their people, refused, resisted and fought against the foreign traders, despite their superior strength and use of firearms. Most famous of these African commission agents and local traffickers were the East Africans and Arabs, who spoke Swahili, a language forged from Arabic and African languages, as well as the Muslim religion.

What about Zanzibar?

Zanzibar was a major transit island for the slave trade in the Indian Ocean. Arabs and Arabized people, such as Tippu Tip, or Tippu Tib, real name Ḥamad ibn Muḥammad ibn Jum'ah ibn Rajab ibn Muḥammad ibn Sa'īd al Murjabī, an Afro-Omani ivory and slave owner and trader (1837-1905), and his son, Sefu, who continued the job after his father's death, were famous slave traders who made a fortune from Black Africans, especially operating in eastern Congo. They linked the Eastern African hinterland to Zanzibar. Those invaders had also local dealers, such as the Congolese Songye tribe hero chieftain and fighter Ngongo Lutete (or Gongo Lutete or Ngongo Leteta). After joining the Arab slave traders, he changed and opposed his former slave trader's master and served the Belgian colonialists, who executed him after falsely accusing him of plotting and betraying the Congo Free State. Zanzibar remains and archives demonstrate the scale of the slave trade. Similarly, Goree Island in Senegal in West Africa, along with numerous other 'human markets' and 'doors of no return', played a role akin to that of Zanzibar, serving as prisons and fortresses for millions of Africans *en route* to America — a journey from which they never returned. Not all Black Africans arrived safely in America: one-third died as a result of mistreatment, disease or rebellion. Some even chose to commit suicide or jump overboard rather than continue such a perilous journey into the unknown. Those sailors treated Black Africans like animals, cramming them together, mistreating them and throwing them into the ocean on a whim. They only fed them upon arrival to ensure they looked healthy in the markets. And, to prevent any revolt, the sailors loaded them like animals, avoiding mixing individuals from the same tribe and village. What is less told is that many brave Black Africans refused to embark, fought, rebelled and resisted, and even threw themselves into the ocean rather than continue the journey. Some even revolted during the voyage, capturing ships and killing everyone on board.

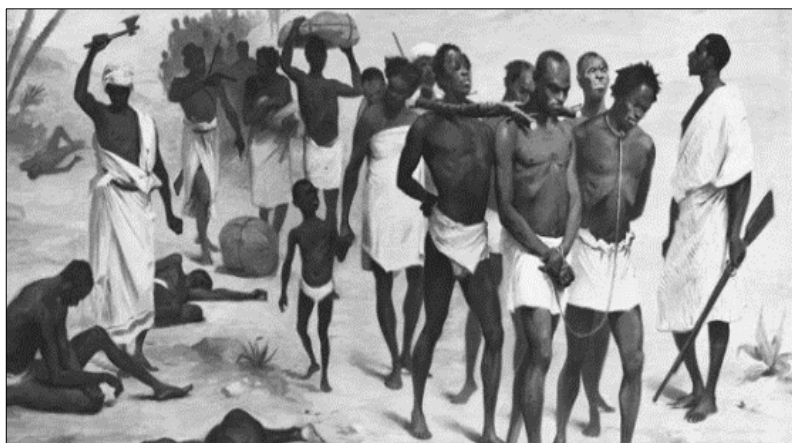
Did the British also participate in the slave trade?

Along with the Portuguese, the British were the first to launch the slave trade. John Lok and William Towerson were the first Englishmen to bring back five black people from Guinea in 1555, and to capture others on their voyage from Plymouth to Africa between 1556 and 1557. Meanwhile, John Hawkins launched the triangular trade, bringing 1,200 black people from Sierra Leone to the Dominican Republic in 1562, and returning to England with sugar,

tobacco and other commodities. From 1640 until its abolition in 1807, the British captured three million of the 12–13 million Africans taken to the Americas. The transatlantic slave trade contributed to the development of Liverpool, Bristol, Plymouth and Glasgow. Some slave traders were philanthropists who sponsored schools and built buildings that survived to this day. Many of their portraits are still displayed in museums. In Bristol, England, for example, on 7 June 2020, in response to the death of George Floyd in the US and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, demonstrators pulled down the statue of the slave trader Edward Colston (1636–1721) and pushed it into Bristol Harbour. It is now on display in a museum.

How was this shameful trade stopped? Did the Africans resist and fight against it?

Africans fought using whatever they had: spears, fetishes, juju, their bare hands, songs and stones. Many who fought are still remembered in Africa, including some kings and queens. Those transported to America and the Caribbean Islands also continued to fight and resist their white masters. In the West Indies, the Maroons rose to prominence. Following an uprising led by Toussaint Louverture, and inspired by the 1789 French Revolution, Haiti became the first black country to gain independence from France on 1 January 1804. Subsequently, the ideas of the Enlightenment and the abolitionist movement in Europe and America, led specifically by the Reformed Church in the United Kingdom, finally led to the abolition of slavery throughout its colonies in 1807. France re-abolished slavery in 1848 and the US in 1865. However, those ends led to another disaster for Africa: the colonisation of Africa by the West, which began with the



Berlin Conference. African populations became very hostile towards foreigners, particularly white people, who were murdered and even eaten due to this anger.

What about the famous Taubira law in France?

Named after MP Christiane Taubira, this important legal instrument, a law passed in 1998 to mark the 150th anniversary of the second and final abolition of slavery in the French colonies, acknowledges that the transatlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades, as well as slavery itself, perpetrated in the Americas, the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and Europe against African, Amerindian, Malagasy and Indian populations from the 15th century onwards, *constitute crimes against humanity*. It also ensures that school curricula and research programmes in history and the humanities will give the slave trade and slavery the place they deserve, while encouraging cooperation to link written archives in Europe with oral sources and archaeological knowledge in Africa, the Americas, the Caribbean and all other territories where slavery was practised.

New African explorations: Livingstone and Stanley

What were the motivations behind Western explorers' journeys to Africa during the last centuries, and what were they searching for?

The Enlightenment increased the appetite of Western scientists and businessmen for discovering the unknown and exploring overseas lands. A *terra incognita*, little was known about the African interior, which remained shrouded in mystery, except for a few stories from Arab travellers and basic maps. Sponsored explorers and scientists developed a keen interest in Africa as the Industrial Revolution required natural resources that only Africa could supply.

What about the source of the Nile headache?

During those years, the quest for the source of the Nile became the Holy Grail. Since the time of the ancient Greeks and Romans, its precise location has remained unknown. The famous Royal Geographical Society, founded in London on 16 July 1830, took over the quest for the source of the River Nile, said to be that the river was full of gold and precious metals. The first renowned explorers it commissioned were the British Richard Francis Burton (1821-1890) and his second, John Hanning Speke (1827-1864). They teamed up in 1856 to Zanzibar, by then a significant Indian Ocean

port and hub for the slave trade. They left in June 1857 and reached Lake Tanganyika in February 1858, becoming the first Europeans to explore it. The expedition was fraught with problems and tropical diseases: Burton remained while Speke journeyed farther north and found the lake he named Lake Victoria, which no European had ever visited, and most importantly, learned from the natives that the source of the Nile was nearby. Unfortunately, both had a heated discussion as they returned to England separately. Speke, who arrived first, claimed he had found the Nile's source, while Burton, a dedicated geographer, refused it, saying that it was the Ruzizi river connected to the Tanganyika and that, in the absence of Speke, he circumnavigated in a canoe, relating to his paddlers' accounts, as his eye disease did not allow him to see anything; what is an error as the Ruzizi river flows into Tanganyika and not the other way round. Speke later led his own expedition into Africa (1860-1863) with James Augustus Grant; accompanied by 176 men, he left Zanzibar in September 1860 for Victoria Lake and found the Nile source on July 28, 1862, making Speke the first Westerner to map it and that he published when back to England, which did not lessen his controversy with Burton and required a high-level scientific arbitration. Tragically, Speke died in a hunting accident the day before the scientists were due to meet in Bath Spa, England, on 18 September 1864. The mystery of the Nile's source remained unsolved until Henry Morton Stanley finally concluded that Speke was right and not Burton, because the Ruzizi did not take its waters from Tanganyika but flowed into it, making it the impossible source of the Nile, whose second source he later found near the Rwenzori mountains.

That's how Dr David Livingstone got involved?

David Livingstone, a Scottish surgeon and Protestant missionary, was the first European explorer to cross Africa from South Africa to the west coast near Angola, and then on to the east coast of Mozambique. Upon returning to Britain, he supported Burton against Speke and attended the scientists' conference in Bath Spa. As David Livingstone had already travelled to Africa, the London Royal Geographical Society commissioned him to return to Africa so that he could finally solve the Nile source mystery. He returned to Africa. But by 1870, no one had heard any news about him. His search had become a quest for the Holy Grail, as many believed he had passed away; others believed he was still alive but missing somewhere in the African hinterland, seeking vital assistance. Whoever found or

met him would return with the answer to the location of the Nile's source. Unfortunately, none of the sponsored expeditions succeeded until H. M. Stanley's.

How did H. M. Stanley achieve such an accomplishment?

Henry Morton Stanley was a young, lucky and self-made explorer with a natural talent for research and an appetite for risk and observation. Born John Rowlands in the Welsh village of Denbigh on 28 January 1841 to an unknown father, raised by his maternal grandfather, when the late passed away, Stanley was sent to St Asaph's workhouse for the poor which life's hard experience shaped him as a person who risks adventure strengthened by the three years he spent, from age of 15 to 18, trained as a pupil teacher at Brynford village school, near Holywell, in Wales which surely built up his intellect and ability to read, write, observe, measure and manage, what may also be one of the keys to his prolific journalistic skills. He later moved to stay with his aunt in Liverpool, where he started small jobs at the main dock. There, a benefactor, the captain of a ship, offered to take him to New Orleans in the USA to try his luck. He became a journalist and changed his birth name, John Rowlands, to Henry Morton Stanley. He rose to fame as a reporter, receiving assignments in Africa and Asia. In 1867, James Gordon Bennett Jr., owner of the *New York Herald* newspaper, commissioned Stanley to seek out Livingstone. According to Stanley,

"On the sixteenth day of October, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-nine, I was in Madrid, fresh from the carnage at Valencia. At 10 A.M., Jacopo, at No.— Calle de la Cruz handed me a telegram: It read, "Come to Paris on important business." The telegram was from Mr James Gordon Bennett, Jr., the young manager of the 'New York Herald.' (...) At 3 P.M., I was on my way (...), and did not arrive at Paris until the following night. I went straight to the 'Grand Hotel' and knocked at the door of Mr Bennett's room.

"Come in," I heard a voice say. Entering, I found Mr Bennett in bed. "Who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Stanley," I answered.

"Ah, yes! sit down; I have important business on hand for you."

After throwing over his shoulders his robe-de-chambre, Mr Bennett asked, "Where do you think Livingstone is?"

"I really do not know, sir."

"Do you think he is alive?"

"He may be, and he may not be," I answered.

"Well, I think he is alive, and that he can be found, and I am going to send you to find him."

"What!" said I, "do you really think I can find Dr Livingstone? Do you mean for me to go to Central Africa?"

*"Yes; I mean that you shall go, and find him wherever you may hear that he is, and to get what news you can of him, and perhaps"—delivering himself thoughtfully and deliberately—"the old man may be in want:—take enough with you to help him should he require it. Of course you will act according to your own plans, and do what you think best—But find Livingstone!" (...). "Well, I will tell you what you will do. Draw a thousand pounds now, and when you have gone through that, draw another thousand, and when that is spent, draw another thousand, and when you have finished that, draw another thousand, and so on; but, find Livingstone."*⁴⁰

What did Henry Morton Stanley then do?

He set sail for Zanzibar, and, using his journalistic skills and information from Arab slave traders, Stanley left Zanzibar on 21 March 1871, leading a caravan of 190 individuals. After travelling 3,500 kilometres over 411 days, he finally met Livingstone in the village of Ujiji on the east coast of Lake Tanganyika on **10 November 1871**, a journalistic historical scoop Stanley immortalised:

"But by this time, we were within two hundred yards of the village, and the multitude was getting denser, and almost preventing our march. Flags and streamers were out; Arabs and Wangwana were pushing their way through the natives to greet us, for according to their account, we belonged to them. (...) The news had been conveyed to the Doctor that it was surely a white man who was coming, whose guns were firing, and whose flag could be seen; and the great Arab magnates of Ujiji (...) had gathered together before the Doctor's house, and the Doctor had come out from his veranda to discuss the matter and await my arrival. (...) My heart beats fast, but I must not let my face betray my emotions, lest it should detract

⁴⁰ <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5157/5157-h/5157-h.htm> [Visited on 23 April 2024].

from the dignity of a white man appearing under such extraordinary circumstances. So I did what I thought was most dignified. I pushed back the crowds, and, passing from the rear, walked down a living avenue of people, until I came in front of the semicircle of Arabs, before which stood the "white man with the grey beard." (...). I would have run to him, only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob—would have embraced him, but that I did not know how he would receive me; so I did what moral cowardice and false pride suggested was the best thing—walked deliberately to him, took off my hat, and said: "DR. LIVINGSTONE, I PRESUME?"

"Yes," said he, with a kind, cordial smile, lifting his cap slightly. I replaced my hat on my head, and he replaced his cap, and we both grasped hands. I then said aloud:

"I thank God, Doctor, I have been permitted to see you."

He answered, "I feel thankful that I am here to welcome you."

*I turned to the Arabs, took off my hat to them in response to the saluting chorus of "Yambos" I received, and the Doctor introduced them to me by name. Then, oblivious of the crowds, oblivious of the men who shared with me my dangers, we—Livingstone and I—turned our faces towards his house. (...) We were seated—the Doctor and I—with our backs to the wall. (...) Conversation began."*⁴¹

Stanley spent months exploring Lake Tanganyika and its rivers with Livingstone. However, Livingstone refused to return to London with him. Stanley and his crowd returned to Zanzibar, from where he sent a dispatch telegram to his New York newspaper on 2 July 1872. The New York Herald created astonishment by headlining the scoop: *'The historic meeting of its reporter Henry Morton Stanley with Dr David Livingstone, alive and well'*. The headline read: **THE LONG-AWAITED NEWS**. It is with great excitement and pleasure that I announce the arrival today of the letters from Mr Stanley, Head of the Herald Expedition exploring Central Africa, followed by his journalistic account of the encounter, headlined **'A HISTORICAL MEETING'**, and his famous phrase, **'Dr Livingstone, I presume?'**, causing the paper to sell like hot cakes

⁴¹ Ibidem.

for several months in the US and UK. Stanley pioneered a new approach to exploration: travelling with a group of porters. On his return, he published his first famous book: *'How I found Livingstone: travels, adventures and discoveries in Central Africa: including four months' residence with Dr. Livingstone'* (1872).

How did Stanley go from being a journalist to becoming an explorer?

The death of Dr David Livingstone changed Stanley's life, as he considered himself his disciple and became the only one capable of completing Livingstone's unfinished work of solving the riddle of the source of the Nile. Livingstone's body arrived in Southampton in April 1874, following his death in Africa on May 1, 1873, at Chief Chitambo's village at Chipundu, now in Zambia. His loyal African servants, Chuma and Susi, found him dead, kneeling in prayer by his bedside. They removed his heart and viscera and buried them near a Mpundu tree, embalmed his body, carried it on a nine-month journey to the Indian Ocean's coast, where it embarked and arrived in Southampton in April 1874. After a ceremony, it took a special train to London for official funerals in Westminster Cathedral on April 18, 1874, and was buried in Westminster Abbey nearby. Two press businessmen sponsored the new Stanley adventure in Africa: the London newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* and the New York newspaper *The New York Herald*. Sent back to Africa, and building on his first African expedition experience and drawing on his journalistic skills, Stanley commissioned a ten-oared, five-sectioned boat from a boat builder in London's Teddington Riverside. He named the boat *'Lady Alice'* after his fiancée, but unfortunately found that she was already married upon his return from Africa. Reaching Zanzibar, he left on November 12, 1874, having recruited 300 carriers, and travelled to the African hinterland following the Arab slave traders' routes. Stanley successfully mapped rivers and lakes, explored and mapped the source of the Nile based on information from the local people. This was the same source that Speke had previously explored. However, to avoid opposition upon his return to London, Stanley revisited Ujiji, where he had met Livingstone, crossed Lake Tanganyika and reached Nyangwe and the Lualaba River, which Livingstone had claimed may be the source of the Nile. Stanley decided to follow what he believed to be either the Niger or the Congo, the mouth of which had already been explored by the Portuguese in 1482. This was a risky adventure as nobody knew where the river flowed. The

slave trader Tippu Tip, who had sold Stanley canoes, refused to accompany him out of fear of the Maniema people, who were said to be cannibals. After crossing the Maniema, Stanley's expedition reached the Boyoma cataracts (now Kisangani) on 6 January 1877.

He finally concluded that the Lualaba was not one of the sources of the Nile.

He realised Livingstone had made a mistake when he saw the Lualaba flowing to the left. However, it was important for him to find out more about the river known as the "*Ikuta ya Kongo*" by the indigenous people, who also told him that it flowed into the ocean.

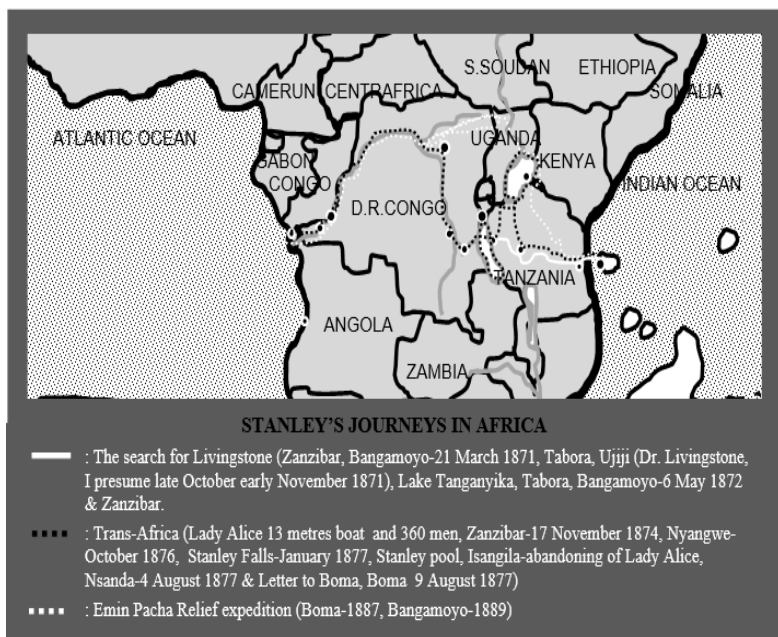
What was the biggest challenge Stanley's expedition faced?

Not only that, he took a risk of crossing the dangerous Maniema forests, where the Arab trader chief Tippu Tip reported that the population was made up of cannibals. In fact, because of the slave trade, indigenous people became suspicious of any foreigner and were ready to fight. Another challenge was that Stanley would cross unknown lands and rivers without reliable information about where they would bring him. Most of Stanley's porters deserted and died from tropical diseases, while Stanley himself could have even lost his life, or been killed in attacks by local people hostile to foreigners, as these people, who had already suffered from the slave trade, were armed with guns. His three European companions, and his boy Kalulu whom he brought from Africa during his first expedition in search of Livingstone and schooled in London, after a tour with him in the UK and US, all died. Fortunately, after several months, his expedition reached the end of the navigable river where the last European on his expedition, Frank Popock, was so amazed by the sudden widening of the river that he named it *Stanley Pool*, now Pool Malebo between Brazzaville and Kinshasa. The expedition engaged in its most challenging journey; it took five months to cross the 300 cataracts, a distance of 350 kilometres to the Atlantic! Stanley lost many people, including his last European companion, Frank Popock, whose canoe was swept away downstream of Leopoldville by the Cataract.

What did Henry Morton Stanley do next?

Upon arriving in the village of Isangila, Stanley finally decided to abandon Lady Alice, as it was impossible to carry it through the mountains and cataracts. The natives informed him that the sea was only a few days' journey away. However, the expedition was unable to move any faster due to Stanley's severe illness, which could

have led to his death. Moreover, they could not buy food or exchange their goods, such as fabrics, with the locals, who considered them worthless. They arrived in Nsanda on 3 August 1877. On the 5th, Stanley sent an SOS letter to the coast: *“To any gentleman who speaks English.”* On the 7th, Europeans from Boma rescued Stanley’s expedition which later walked to reach Boma on 9 August 1877, 999 days after they left Zanzibar: Stanley and his men had successfully crossed Central Africa from east to west. One of Boma’s tourist attractions is the tree known as Stanley’s Boabab, where, according to legend, he spent the night inside it upon his arrival. As he was always very curious, he surely visited it and entered its hollow (had he dug it during his other travels?).



What did Stanley accomplish on that Trans-Africa expedition?

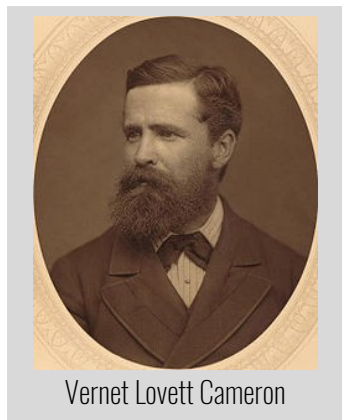
Stanley explored and circumnavigated Lake Victoria (also known as Lake Nyanza), successfully solving the mystery of the Nile's source and confirming Speke's theory that the Ruzizi River flows into Lake Tanganyika, contrary to Burton's mistaken belief. By the time they reached Boma, Stanley had lost half his body weight and looked like an old man, despite being only thirty years old, after

risking death from tropical diseases, attacks, accidents, or drowning. Having left Zanzibar with 228 recruits, including 36 women and 10 boys, Stanley boarded a ship for Zanzibar on 26 November 1877 with 108 people remaining, including 3 children born during the journey, and headed for London on 13 December 1877. Upon his return, H. M. Stanley published another bestseller, *Through the Dark Continent*. He was also surprised that his Lady Alice had married another man. Stanley later married Dorothy Tennant.

H. M. Stanley in the Congo, working for Leopold II.

Stanley went on to become a famous journalist and author...

Unfortunately, the London establishment refused to support his expedition, partly because those they had commissioned to search for Livingstone had returned empty-handed, and partly because



Vernet Lovett Cameron

they were jealous of him. The Royal Geographical Society, for example, commissioned the British explorer Vernet Lovett Cameron to find Livingstone, dead or alive. En route to Eastern Africa, Cameron encountered Livingstone's disciples, James Chuma and Susi, carrying his body to the coast. After taking an inventory of Livingstone's belongings, he continued and reached the eastern Congolese town of Nyangwe. Having explored the Lualaba, he felt compelled to

follow it. However, no one wanted to accompany him or provide him with boats. He would have been the first to sail and explore the entire Congo River, a feat that Stanley would succeed in as he decided to brave this mysterious country. Ultimately, he had no choice but to join a Portuguese slave-trader convoy. They reached the Atlantic coast of Angola, making him the first European to cross Central Africa from east to west. He also witnessed and reported on the atrocities of the slave trade, but missed the opportunity to be the first to circumnavigate the Congo River from its source, which Stanley was fortunate enough to do.

Then emerged the Belgian King Leopold II

Eager to expand his small and impoverished country, Leopold II, the second king of Belgium, which gained its independence from the Netherlands on October 4, 1830, sought new lands. After unsuccessful attempts, Stanley's expedition from Central Africa seemed an opportunity for him, since the British were not interested in it. Having previously declined the King's invitation while transiting through Marseille from Africa to the UK, Stanley did not miss such an opportunity when the King finally invited him to meet him, and he travelled to Brussels. Leopold II offered Stanley a new job opportunity: to return to the Congo, but he ensured that Stanley could not suspect his hidden colonial agenda. The King had previously established the '**Association Internationale Africaine**' (AIA), officially a philanthropic organisation fighting against the slave trade in Africa, after his Brussels Geographical Conference in 1876, and finally established the '**Comité d'Etudes du Haut-Congo**' CEHC, which employed Stanley to study how the people of the Congo basin could trade with the West. By the time Stanley was in the Congo, Leopold II had changed the CEHC to the '**Association Internationale du Congo**' (AIC), a colonial enterprise in which he invested money and attracted investors to join him in his African adventure.

What did Stanley do after signing the contract with the king?

As Stanley had a good knowledge of the Congo Basin, he worked for the king from 1879 to 1884: founded the stations of Vivi, Isangila, Leopoldville, Equateurville, Stanley Falls, etc. These stations became cities and towns; some of them still exist. He also circumnavigated rivers, mapped places and drew the first map of the Congo and famously and visionarily stated that '*without a railway*' [connecting the Congo River's navigable basin to the Atlantic, bypassing the cataracts, hills, falls and rapids of the Congo Central Province plateaux, which made the river unnavigable after the Pool Malebo basin, formerly Stanley Pool], *the Congo isn't worth a penny*'. He launched the first modern road from the Congo River mouth to Leopoldville via Matadi, a precursor to the first Leopoldville-Matadi railway, built between 1890 and 1898. He also launched the first steamboats from Leopoldville to navigate the river and its tributaries. Stanley and other King's agents signed 400 treaties with Congolese traditional chiefs who did not understand the meaning of a treaty, as they had only put their fingerprints on them. Through these treaties, the chiefs accepted the authority of Leopold II, or at least that of his 'Comité', whose blue flag bearing a yellow star,

designed by Stanley, was flown everywhere. While Stanley only agreed for the chiefs to open their lands to trade with the West and Leopold II, in other treaties that other agents signed, it mentioned that the Congolese kings effectively ceded their lands to the newcomers. In effect, this was a swindle, as the land was mortgaged for the price of a few yards of cloth, wine, mirrors and manufactured items. Stanley and the Belgians were not alone; the race for African lands was underway. On the right bank of river, now Brazzaville, Franco-Italian Savorgnan de Brazza was fulfilling the same role for France.

What about the founding of present-day Kinshasa?

Before and after the slave trade, the interior of the Congo was a trading hub in contact with the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. On his journey from Zanzibar to Boma, Stanley first encountered the Pool Malebo on 12 March 1877, noting the villages of Insasa (or Nshasa), Mokonga (or Nkunga) and Kintambo (or Ntambo) on the left bank and visited the chief of the right bank, Ngamankono. Accompanied by Tshubula/Tshumvula (Ngobina), chief of Nshansa, he held talks with the chief of the left bank, Itsi, on 1 and 15 March. He met Itsi again in 1881 under his new name of Ngaliema. Returning as Leopold II's agent, Stanley negotiated with those local chiefs, especially Ngaliema, who authorised him to settle near Ntambo, and whom he even instrumentalised to revolt against the real chief Makoko of both Bateke river banks and living at the village of Mbe (now Brazzaville), as De Brazza did not tell him the truth about his agreement with Makoko. On **24 December 1881**, Stanley founded the station he named **Stanley Pool**, which became **Léopoldville** on **9 April 1882** and was located on the site of the former Mont Stanley, where Stanley's gigantic monument was erected and where the DRC's presidential estate now stands. In 1883, the Protestants added two stations nearby where Dr Sims built the first Leopoldville Protestant brick chapel in 1891. Meanwhile, the Catholic Jesuits, who arrived in 1889, moved to Kimwenza and left Kintambo Hill to the Scheutist's Fathers, where Father Calon founded the first Catholic parish, St Leopold, on 2 December 1899, now the St John XXIII Major Seminary and built the first Catholic chapel in 1902.

So, where does the name 'Kinshasa' come from?

It came from the second post founded near Stanley's Leopoldville: Nsasa (also known as Nshasha), the village of the Teke chief

Nchuvila (also known as Ntsuvila), and was established in 1883, when Stanley, back from Europe, approved and signed a treaty with the Nshasha chief for the new station of Nshasha, founded by Swinburne and Abdullah Susi, to be established. It became connected to Leopoldville and became the present-day Kinshasa. Chronologically, Kinshasa has five founders: Ngaliema, Ntsuvila, Stanley, Swinburne and Abdullah Susi. In 1884, when Savorgnan de Brazza crossed the river from the right bank and wanted to force Chief Nchuvila to deny Stanley's presence so that he could take possession of the area for the French. Swinburne intervened, and after an altercation, De Brazza was forced to leave and never returned.

Who was Anthony Bannister Swinburne?

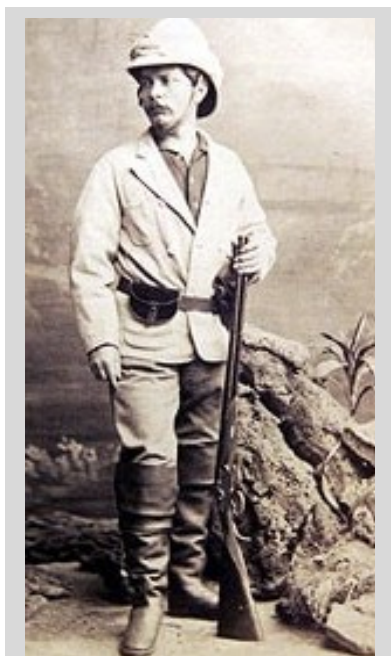
Swinburne (c. 1858–1889) left school when 15 years old to work in London. In 1873, Henry Morton Stanley signed him up for his third trip to Africa for the Congo Free State. After establishing his Leopoldville station in 1881, which he initially named Stanley Pool, Stanley asked his trusted assistant, Anthony Swinburne, to establish a camp near the village of Nsansa, close to the village and beach of Ngobila, an ivory seller. Swinburne moved in with Stanley's Zanzibar agent Abdullah Susi, who had studied in Bombay in 1865, where he had met James Chuma, and when back in Africa, they become disciples of Dr David Livingstone they accompanied, witnessed the Livingstone–Stanley meeting at Ujiji, and after Livingstone death in 1873, they transported his body to the coast, they both arrived in England in 1874 where the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) awarded them recognition medals and they spent times with Livingstone's family, returned the same year and travelled later with Henry Morton Stanley from 1874 to 1882. Once, when Stanley returned to Leopoldville from the Upper Congo, he brought Disasi Makulo and another young man he left with Swinburne, who treated these two young Congolese with the same affection that Stanley had shown them, so that the latter could teach them reading and writing.

How did Swinburne spend his last days?

As Leopold II had not renewed his contract, Swinburne returned to England in 1886 with his two boys, Stanley left him, including Disasi Makulo, and they returned to the Congo the same year, settled in Nsansa with his two, whom he raised as his own children, and succeeded as an ivory trader, exporting large quantities from the outset. According to Disasi, Swinburne was a good father, much like Stanley, who had freed them from the slave traders. This is in stark

contrast to the common misconception that Stanley disliked Black people, a notion thoroughly debunked by Tim Jeal. Swinburne met Stanley again during the latter's Emin Pasha expedition. Having fallen ill in 1889, Disasi and his friend carried Swinburne on a hammock to Boma. At the Ngombe-Lutete station, the BMS missionary George Grenfell took charge of Swinburne for a fortnight. Unfortunately, Swinburne died and was buried in Boma. Following Swinburne's death, Grenfell adopted Disasi, who was 18 years old at the time. He became Grenfell's disciple, and Grenfell baptised him. Together, they travelled back home to preach the gospel. George Grenfell died in Basoko in 1906. Disasi named his eldest son Georges Grenfell, who became a secretary of state in the Lumumba government and one of the first medical assistants or most qualified nurses in the Belgian Congo.

Could the rivalry between Stanley and De Brazza also explain the apparent one between Brazzaville and Kinshasa?



Stanley was wearing the clothes and hat he had on when he met Livingstone in Africa

Probably. Although colonial borders divided the Bakongo and Bateke in both countries, and Congolese from Brazzaville have different spellings from those in Kinshasa, the two cities seem to be like brother-enemies in their history. Lingala and Kikongo/Munu Kutumba are spoken on both sides, albeit with different pronunciations, and are mutually understandable. Initially, the federated king of the Bateke was Makoko of Mbe (now Brazzaville), but his vassal on the left bank, Ngaliema, proclaimed himself chief of his village near Kintambo and made a deal with Stanley, while Makoko signed an agreement with De Brazza. Then, during

colonisation, the Belgians managed the Congo in an apartheid-like system, which the people of Brazzaville did not experience. Brazzaville's inhabitants seemed more emancipated, especially after the Second World War, when General de Gaulle's 1944 speech in Brazzaville made the Congolese almost French citizens, with elected members of parliament in Paris. This was unthinkable in Leopoldville. So, Congolese from Leopoldville had to cross the river to drink wine, which was prohibited in the Belgian Congo. Although Kinshasa gained independence before Brazzaville, at independence in 1960, its president, Father Fulbert Youlou, who was a Mukongo like Joseph Kasa-Vubu, made Kasa-Vubu his protégé because he was one of De Gaulle's allies and dreamed of rebuilding a modern Kongo Kingdom. However, no one understood how President Father Fulbert Youlou was supporting the secessionist leader, Moses Tshombe. He was officially visited in his independent Katanga and was welcomed to Brazzaville with all the honour and protocol of a head of state. Some believe that it was due to the connection between French President De Gaulle and Youlou, as the former envied Katanga and supported its secession, just as France's Charles de Gaulle did during the Nigerian Biafran War, which he supported to take advantage of Nigeria's Biafran oil exploitation.

Stanley was then given the nickname 'Bula Matari'.

When Stanley was making the first modern road in the now Congo Central province from Matadi to Kinshasa, he used dynamite explosions to break rocks and stones in the Cristal Mountains. His workers, mainly from Zanzibar, speaking Swahili, Stanley also spoke, and nicknamed him '*Bula Matari*', meaning '*breaker of the rocks*.' It was a phonetic distortion of the original '*bula matadi*' in Kikongo, the local language; in Swahili, '*di*' is replaced by '*ri*'. Stanley liked the nickname so much that it was engraved on his tombstone in Pirbright, and '*bulamatari*' is one of Stanley's legacies in the Congo, as the word is used in Congolese languages and means '*State*', '*government*', '*public power*', and '*national affairs*'. In 1884, Stanley returned to Europe as Leopold II did not renew his contract, instead appointing the British Sir Francis Walter de Winton as the first Administrator-General of the Congo Free State in 1885.

Has Stanley returned to Congo once more?

He returned to the Congo for the final time, having been commissioned for the Emin Pasha relief expedition (1886–1889). Sailing up the Congo River from its mouth at Banana, the expedition travelled

to Leopoldville via Matadi, before continuing up the Congo and the Aruwimi rivers and crossing the mysterious Ituri Forest, as Emin Pasha was last located near the Congo/South Sudan borders. It was a disastrous expedition. Stanley divided it into two groups: one to follow behind and another to move ahead. But after crossing the Ituri, he walked back to collect the remaining column and was astonished to discover that his carriers had died from tropical diseases and hunger due to a lack of food from neighbouring villages and also the Arab Tippu Tip he had previously paid to supply the column, never provided them with food. Stanley resumed his Ituri crossing, confirmed the snow on the Ruwenzori Mountains and established that Lake Albert was the second Nile source already discovered by Florence and Samuel Baker. He also met Emin Pasha. However, like Livingstone, Pasha declined to return to Britain with Stanley, who ultimately reached the east coast of Africa. Already famous for his phrase, '*Dr Livingstone, I presume?*', and fortunate enough to be the first Westerner to navigate the Congo River from source to mouth, Stanley became the first Westerner to cross Central Africa from east to west and vice versa.

What did Stanley do in the days before his death?

Stanley was naturalised as an American citizen in 1885, married English artist Dorothy Tennant in 1880, and they did not have any children, but adopted a child named Denzil Morton Stanley, the son of one of Stanley's first cousins; he died in 1959 and was buried in the same grave as Stanley and Dorothy, who died in 1926. Re-naturalised as British, Stanley was elected Liberal Unionist MP for Lambeth North on 15 July 1895, served until 17 September 1900, was knighted in 1899, later visited South Africa for the opening of the Bulawayo Railway in 1897, and died at his home at 2 Richmond Terrace, Whitehall, London, on 10 May 1904 and was buried in the churchyard of St Michael and All Angels' Church in Pirbright, Surrey, where there is a memorial for him inside the church. His grave is marked by a large piece of granite inscribed with the words '*Henry Morton Stanley, Bula Matari, 1841–1904, Africa*'.

Could we assert that missionaries trailed behind explorers?

Indeed, one cannot exist without the other. Both travellers without borders, explorers have always enjoyed a good relationship with God's preachers. The former often pave the way for the latter, who facilitate the development of science and act as guardians of knowledge. And, on their arrival, Catholic and Protestant

missionaries adopted a humanitarian approach in their relationship with Africans, Blancs and Congolese, different from the other colonialists and slave traders, and were known as the “good White” learning the local languages and tribal cultures they evangelised, and they, of course, were mistakenly described as evil. Since the Middle Ages, for instance, monasteries have been centres of learning and dissemination of knowledge. While the Catholics played an important role in opening the first universities in Europe (and in the DRC) and in managing schools (until now), Arab scholars and scientists also reached Europe and Africa with the advent of Islam. For example, Timbuktu, a city in Mali and its famous ancient universities and libraries, owes much to Islam. The other world religions, such as Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism, have also played the same role and made important contributions to the world heritage. As African exploration took place during the golden age of Catholic and Protestant Christianity in Europe, preachers and missionaries quickly followed the explorers to spread the word of God in these new lands. When the Portuguese explorer Diego Cao reached the mouth of the Congo River in 1482, he thought he had found the legendary country of Prester John, who was said to be the last Christian in a land threatened by infidels. After establishing relations with the Kingdom of Kongo, missionaries arrived. During his Trans-Africa expedition (1874-1877) from Zanzibar to Boma, during which he circumnavigated Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika, explored and fixed the Nile source of the Nile and became the first to explore the Congo River from its source to its mouth, upon arriving in 1875 at the court of Kabaka (King) Mutesa I of Buganda, now Uganda, whom he praised for his standing and nobility, H. M. Stanley preached the Gospel to him and wrote an article, which was sent back to London for *The Daily Telegraph*, requesting that missionaries be sent to Uganda⁴².

⁴² Invited by Mutesa I, the first Protestant Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionaries, Shergold Smith, Rev. C.T. Wilson, Edward John Baxter, and Henry Cole arrived in Buganda in 1877. The first Protestant convert in Buganda was Sembera Mackay, baptised on March 18, 1882. The Catholic Society of Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) Father Siméon Lourdel (locally known as Mapera) and Brother Delmas Amans arrived in Uganda in 1879 from Tabora (Tanzania) and introduced Catholicism. Their first convert was a Kabaka Mwanga II page, Charles Lwanga, and others. As those converted pages refused vile practices such as acts of sodomy and refused also to abandon their faith, Mwanga brutally executed them between 1885 and 1887: 45—22 Catholics and 23 Anglicans, now the Holy Uganda Martyrs, the king

By those years also, Dr D. Livingstone's stories sparked the movement of Protestant gospel preachers in Africa, especially around the foundation of the Livingstone Inland Mission (LIM).

What about the DRC evangelisation?

After Stanley completed his trans-African expedition and the DRC became more connected to the outside world, Protestant and Catholic missionaries seized the opportunity to expand Christianity. From Cameroon, the British Protestant Baptist Mission Society (BMS) Reverends Thomas J. Comber and George Grenfell arrived in Congo in January 1878 as pioneer missionaries. And, having worked in Cameroon with George Grenfell from 1876 to 1878, and after returning to England, Henry Edmund Crudgington (1852–1931) and Thomas James Comber (7 November 1852 – 27 June 1887) left Liverpool in April 1879 to settle definitively in Congo. They arrived at Banana on 9 June and went to stay in San Salvador, where Comber's servant, William Mantu Parkinson, became the first Congolese to be baptised in 1886. After visiting Stanley Pool, Comber left San Salvador and died on 27 June 1887 in Loango, en route to Boma. The second Protestant community in Congo was the Livingstone Inland Mission (LIM), whose establishment spirit came in 1877 from Pastor Alfred Tilly, a prominent Cardiff-based Baptist Missionary Society pastor and minister of Bethany Church, St Mary Street (1857-1861) and minister-founder of Tredegarville Baptist Church (1861-1893). It was finally Henry Grattan Guinness who adopted the idea and founded the LIM in 1878.

How did it happen?

In 1877, Alfred Tilly had an inspirational idea to launch a missionary society in the footsteps of David Livingstone's works and received financial support from the Cardiff businessmen Cory brothers. In 1878, he handed the project to the Irish Protestant preacher and great evangelist of the Evangelical Awakening Henry Grattan Guinness (born in Montpelier House, near Kingstown in Taney, Dublin, Ireland, August 11, 1835, died in Bath, England,

ordered to torture and burn to death at Namugogo on June 3, 1886. Pope Paul VI canonised the 22 Catholics in 1964, and their Feast Day celebrated on June 3rd. During the debate on whether to remove or keep H. M. Stanley's statue in his birth town of Denbigh, the Ugandans in the UK contributed in questioning: How, on earth, could we deny Stanley while Christianity in Uganda and the Holy Martyrs are, in fact, part of Stanley's positive legacy to celebrate?

June 21, 1910, and buried in Bath Abbey Cemetery) and his wife, Fanny (London, April 9, 1831-3 Nov 1898 at Cliff House, Curbar, Derbyshire, buried in Baslow churchyard) who founded, in March 1873, in East End of London, the *East London Training Institute for Home and Foreign Missions (also called Harley College)*, based at Harley House, 29 Stepney Green, in Bromley-by-Bow, and which he directed till his death with his wife Fanny as a secretary. It trained 1,330 missionaries from 30 societies. With the opening of the Congo and the publication of H. M. Stanley's letters at the end of 1877, inspired by and having adopted Reverend Alfred Tilly's vision, Guinness and his wife who decided to concentrate on foreign missions launched, in 1878, a monthly magazine, '*The Regions Beyond*,' and especially founded the *Livingstone Inland Mission (LIM)*, established in London to evangelise the Congo Free State. The LIM became, in 1880, a branch of the institute, with Guinness as director and Mrs Guinness as secretary, as Reverend Till resigned in 1880 so that he could concentrate on his day-to-day preaching. In February 1878, the first LIM members, the British Henry Craven and the Dane sailor Ludvig (or Louis) Strom, arrived in Matadi and moved to establish the first Protestant station at Pala-Bala, 15 miles inland from Matadi, on land that the Congolese king, Kangampaka, gave them. Strom left soon after, and new missionaries arrived: from England, Henry Richards in April, and James Telford in June 1878. He tragically died shortly after, becoming the first LIM missionary to die in the Congo. Then, the Irish Dr Aaron Sims arrived in the Congo in 1882, lived in Pala-Bala, and in February 1883, they reached Leopoldville with Joseph Clark and K. J. Pettersson. Trained as a physician, Sims became a pioneer of tropical medicine in the region, established the first hospital in Leopoldville, and was dedicated to treating diseases like sleeping sickness, dysentery, and other ailments that ravaged the local population and Europeans. Assisted by the Congolese, he taught to make bricks, Rev. Sims, the legal Representative of the ABFMS, built the first Protestant brick chapel in 1891, overlooking Ngaliema Bay on the riverbank. It is now Kinshasa's oldest building and house of worship in the CBCO protestant compound. The LIM was dissolved in 1884 and taken over by the ABMU/American Baptist Mission Union, which changed its name to the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society/ABFMS, named since the '*Communauté Baptiste du Congo-Ouest*', CBCO. The third Protestant established in Congo was the Congo Balolo Mission.

What is the CBM short story?

In June 1887, the LIM founder's son, Henry (Harry) Grattan Guinness II (Toronto/Canada, October 2, 1861 - May 26, 1915 at his residence, 329 Essex Road, Islington, London, and buried in Abney Park Cemetery in Stoke Newington) became the responsible of his parents' missionary college in London. During the 1888 World Missionary Convention at Exeter Hall in London, Harry met Dr Murdock, the leader of the American Baptist Missionary Union (ABMU), which took over the LIM four years earlier, and especially the Irish LIM now ABMU John McKittrick, who had been working in Equateurville (now Mbandaka), and returned to Europe at the end of 1887, for the convention, accompanied by a Mololo (Congolesse tribe) boy, Bompole. Henry Grattan Guinness II adopted John McKittrick's vision to extend the field of activity further upstream into the south and west tributaries of the great bend of the Congo River and founded, in 1888, the *Congo Balolo Mission* (CBM). As H. G. Guinness was also a medical doctor, CBM's purpose also became to bring and mix medical and evangelical work to the Balolo people and other tribes living along the tributaries of the Upper Congo River. Reverend McKittrick, his family, Bompole, and the first CBM missionaries left England in April 1889, reached Matadi in August 1889, trekked upstream to Stanley Pool (Leopoldville), and moved and established the CBM stations in the province of Equateur, where they settled in the region of the tributary rivers of Lulonga, Maringa, Lopori, Ikelemba, Tshuapa, Juapa and Bosira. By 1900, most of them died of accidents or malaria and sleeping sickness; only six of the first thirty-five CBM missionaries were alive. As it was in those regions that Leopold II's atrocities were committed during the same years, CBM became the most reliable witnesses and denouncers, such as the photographer Alice Seeley Harris, and joined and campaigned for the Congolesse since its founder, Henry Grattan Guinness, co-founded in 1904, with Edmund Morel, the Congo Reform Association. In 1904, the RBMU, which took over the CBM mission, published Henry Grattan Guinness's booklet, *Congo Slavery*, which contributed to King Leopold II ending his private rule in the Congo in 1908. There is another British-established Protestant church which also made a positive contribution in the colonial Congo: The Salvation Army.

How did the Salvation Army become involved in the Congo?

Co-founded on 5 July 1865 by the Methodist preacher William Booth (born in Nottingham, England, on April 10, 1829, died in Hadley Wood, London, England, on August 20, 1912 and buried at Abney Park Cemetery in Stoke Newington, London, his tomb is a notable monument, where he was laid to rest alongside his wife), and his wife Catherine Booth (born in Ashbourne, Derbyshire, England, on January 17, 1829, died in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, England, on October 4, 1890), as the East London Revival Society, later the Christian Mission, and finally it adopted the name of The Salvation Army in 1878, it aimed first to evangelise and work with people whom the established and traditional churches neglected. Believing that his organisation was waging a spiritual war against sin, poverty, injustice, and misery, Booth adopted the look-like military uniforms and ranks (General, Commissioner, Major, Captain, etc.) as a symbol of total dedication and their headquarters are called 'Headquarters' and their places of worship 'posts'. Having established itself in Europe by around 1930, the Salvation Army decided to come to the Congo, and in 1934, Belgian Adjutant Henri Becquet was sent on an exploratory mission there. Upon his return, he left with his wife, Louise, arriving in Matadi on 25 September 1934 and moved to Leopoldville, where they organised their first two meetings, on 14 October at 'Zando ya Imbwa' (Dog Market) and expanded on the railway line villages and sites to Matadi. Because of the letter 'S' embroidered on Becquet and other Salvationists' uniforms, they became popular among the Congolese, and especially the then-prohibited Kimbanguists, whose prophet Simon Kimbangu was imprisoned in 1921, considering them to be his incarnation. In 1939, the Congolese Simon-Pierre Mpadi (1909-1970), a former Salvationist, founded the 'Mission des Noirs' church based on Simon Kimbangu's messianism. Mpadi claimed to be the incarnation and saviour of the world before being arrested, and he and his followers were sent to the prison in Befale and then Elisabethville in 1939. He was released in May 1960 without having been tried or convicted. It was the first organised church connected to Simon Kimbangu. The Kimbanguists quickly adopted the Salvationist music, especially their brass band, as many of their first adepts were former Salvation Army followers.

What about the Catholic Church?

The first Catholic arrived after the first arrival of Diego Cao in Congo in 1482 and were expelled definitively from the Kongo Kingdom in 1835. The second Congo evangelisation began with the

establishment of the Boma parish on 12 May 1880 by the Holy Spirit's Fathers. In 1865, the Holy See entrusted them with the Apostolic Prefecture of Congo, which was elevated to the Apostolic Vicariate of the Independent Congo in 1888 and entrusted to the Belgian Missionaries of Scheut (CICM), who settled in Boma and expanded into the Congo. In eastern Congo, the Missionaries of Africa (aka the White Fathers), founded by French Cardinal Lavigerie in 1868, arrived in Mulwewa, north of Lake Tanganyika, on 25 September 1880, and established the first Catholic mission at Nyangezi near Bukavu on 15 September 1906. Nuns, brothers and fathers followed and occupied the entire Congo territory.

Berlin Conference: Leopold II and the Congo Free State

How did the colonisation of Africa begin?

By the mid-19th century, Westerners used advances in shipbuilding, navigation and cartography to sponsor explorations of unknown areas. Africa became the epicentre of these explorations due to the limited knowledge of the continent. By the end of the century, European countries had established their presence on the continent. And, to prevent conflicts of interest between Western powers in Africa, German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck organised the Berlin International Conference from 15 November 1884 to 26 February 1885 and attended by fourteen countries: *Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden-Norway (unified from 1814 to 1905) and Turkey*. The conference also intended to resolve Portugal, Belgium and France's conflict on the Congo River's freedom of navigation and its mouth ownership dispute, as each imposed its own tax.

What were the primary consequences of the so-called Scramble for Africa?

The Berlin Conference exacerbated the scale of the African catastrophe by dividing the continent into new, distinct European colonies without consulting Africans. It forced formerly disparate and divided tribes to unite, disregarding traditional African structures and rulers and denying African cultures and identities the Europeans must Christianise and civilise. The former Kongo Kingdom, for example, was divided into three colonial States: Portugal Kongo (now Angola), Belgian Kongo (DRC), and French Kongo (Brazzaville). In Nigeria, the Muslim north was linked to the Christian and

animist south. The new colonial borders that modern states copied and pasted have disrupted traditional structures too much, as chiefs, kings, and emperors cross more than one country while their subjects ignore them, quite simply. In the Congo Central province of the DRC, the Bakongo travel to Brazzaville on foot without visas or documents. On the southern border of Bandundu province of the DRC, the Tshokwe have villages on either side of Angola, and the border markers are barely visible. The Bateke simply ignore the border on both banks of the Congo River. Knowing which country the nomadic Fulani people of West Africa belong to is a puzzle. Even after independence, the colonisation that the Berlin Conference initiated sowed the seeds for some of Africa's bloodiest conflicts. Therefore, despite the positive aspects of encounters between people and the good that colonisation may have brought, colonisation was a clash of cultures. In its conquests of African lands, colonisation killed and destroyed entire villages, peoples and tribes; it was the law of the strongest. Expeditions were organised to subjugate people as strongly and brutally as possible. Any form of resistance was not tolerated. On their arrival, they were not greeted by traditional chiefs, who rejected colonial rule. The colonialists, therefore, appointed usurpers, destroying the traditional roots, a dualism that has persisted until now. The wounds and scars left by colonisation are enormous.

What about the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

The DRC has an incredible history of colonisation. As Stanley and other lobbyists for Leopold II exhibited 500 treaties signed by Congolese chiefs, the Belgian King became the biggest beneficiary of the Berlin Conference, as the General Act signed on 12 February 1885 declared the Congo River basin to be neutral territory and guaranteed freedom of trade and shipping for all states. It also forbade the slave trade, rejected Portugal's claims to the mouth of the Congo River and recognised King Leopold II as the sovereign of the Congo. On 29 May 1885, Leopold II officially informed the signatories that he had named the country the '**Congo Free State**' (l'État Indépendant du Congo). This new country was eighty times the size of Belgium, and its flag, the same as the IAC one, was a yellow star on a dark blue background. Leopold II appointed the British Sir Francis de Winton, the first EIC Governor-General. On July 1, 1885, Francis de Winton proclaimed the Congo Free State at Vivi, its first capital. This was later moved to Boma (1886–1923) and finally to Leopoldville.

Congo Leopold II's Red Rubber Exploitation

How did King Leopold II govern the Congo?

In Congo's early years, the Belgian parliament and government refused to support Leopold II's unprofitable colonial venture. The King, who borrowed from British banks, nearly went bankrupt. However, he benefited greatly from an invention that would revolutionise the world: the pneumatic tyre by Belfast-based Scottish veterinarian **John Boyd Dunlop** (1840–1921). To reduce the impact of bumps on his son's tricycle, which doctors had recommended for exercise, Dunlop wrapped the wooden wheels, surrounded by a metal plate, in a garden hose through which he pumped air. Invented in Belfast in 1887, he patented his invention in the UK in 1888 and, in the USA, in 1890. After a local cyclist from Belfast won a bike race using Dunlop tyres, they were quickly adopted by bicycle factories, which were booming at the time. Dunlop then established his own company to produce his tyres using rubber. However, Dunlop's invention had one drawback: his tyres were difficult to repair when punctured. In 1891, while repairing one for an English cyclist, the French brothers André and Edouard Michelin of Clermont-Ferrand improved upon the Dunlop tyre by adding an inner tube, making it much easier to repair. The pneumatic tyre conquered the world, which was a godsend for Leopold II, as tyres were made of rubber, and the Congolese forests were full of lianas that produced a liquid which, when dried, yielded high-quality rubber. Following the industrial revolution of the 19th century and resulting car and bicycle industries' surge in demand for new rubber tyres, Leopold II's Congo Free State emerged as the world's largest producer and primary supplier of the necessary natural rubber harvested from forests lianas which release a large amount of sap in the form of latex when their bark is cut with a knife or machete.

Then came the Congo rubber.

The Industrial Revolution in Britain and the bicycle and car assembly plants increased global demand for rubber for its tyres. From 1890, Leopold II began exploiting the rubber in the Congo, imposing a compulsory tax in kind on the Congolese population, which was collected by his mercenary agents recruited from Europe and characterised by low morale. They forced the Congolese to increase their rubber collection extracted from forest trees. The

white latex is produced by wild creepers that grow from the ground and climb giant trees, particularly in the now Mai-Ndombe basin and south of the equator. As people did not have enough small containers to put the rubber in, nor the climbing equipment to reach the vines on the tallest trees, they would coat their bodies with the sap, and when they came down the tree, they would roll the solidified liquid into elastic black rubber balls. However, Leopold II's agents forced people to produce more and more rubber. The badly cut and misused vines made it increasingly difficult to find them in the forest, so people had to trek deeper in and even live there for several days before collecting the necessary amount. As the King's rubber demand increased, his agents developed new methods of forcing people to produce it. They began involving the *Force Publique* soldiers, trained and equipped with rifles, to execute anyone who could not produce enough rubber. To prevent any rebellion, they set fire to villages and killed children and women, and to increase the bloodshed further, the agents began counting the bullets given to the soldiers, and to ensure the bullets were used on Congolese victims, the soldiers were forced to produce the hands of those they killed. Soldiers began cutting off innocent people's hands to justify their loss of bullets! These agents also introduced a hippopotamus-skin whip with nails at the end, and just a few blows were enough to draw blood. After receiving thirty lashes, the victim would become numb, and inflicting such a punishment on women and children was tantamount to a death sentence. Brutal, undisciplined soldiers, specially recruited from the disobedient tribes, were trained to administer these whips: one whipping equivalent to two lashes (Hochschild, 1998: 58).

What were the consequences of Leopold II's rubber exploitation for the Congolese population?

The Congo produced 33 tonnes of rubber in 1895, 50 in 1896, 287 in 1897, and 508 tonnes in 1898. As demand for rubber increased, lianas became scarce, and people had to venture deep into the forest to find them, sometimes walking for days to meet the required quantity and quality. Villagers left their homes and set up makeshift camps in the forest, where women, children and men lived together. The exploitation of rubber became a genocide as ten million Congolese lost their lives, while King Leopold II swiftly profited from the Congo, becoming the wealthiest monarch and using the profits to build roads, buildings and castles, thus fulfilling his dream of making Brussels a respectable European city and its future capital. Thus, it

was the Congo's resources that made Belgium and Brussels what they are today and built Leopold II's reputation as a builder King.

What about the “Force Publique”?

It was the Congo Free State, and later, the Belgian Congo army and police recruited from the most undisciplined and morally reprehensible individuals. They were willing to undergo brutal training and instruction aimed at subduing the population. They became a repressive force. Moreover, Congolese armies, police and gendarmeries still use jargon from that period and continue these Leopoldian methods to this day, remaining forces of repression instead of protecting citizens. For example, the DRC army and police training motto in Lingala, *‘civil azali monguna na soda,’* means *‘civilians are the sworn enemies of men in uniform’*, and *‘the uniform is sacred’*, meaning that no civilian is allowed to touch it.

Are there any records available of the atrocities committed by Leopold II's agents in the Congo?

Fortunately, DRC's colonial archives are gradually becoming available, particularly missionary diaries and private letters. Professor Jean Omasombo led the publication of numerous books on the new provinces of the DRC by the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, including the volume on Mai-Ndombe. This contains a variety of archives, missionary reports, and diaries relating to the atrocities witnessed and recorded by missionaries. The photographs in the books offer a glimpse of these tragedies. They also document Congolese resistance. A colonist agent of Leopold II reported: *“The people of the village of Ndua Nkombe, on the left bank of the Mfimi, two hours’ sail downstream from Nioki, greeted two soldiers from the Nioki post with spears and rifle shots. The soldiers had come to collect kaolin to bleach the houses, accompanied by natives from the latter village.” Rather than regretting their actions, the people of Ndua Nkombe claimed that they no longer wished to have any dealings with the people of Boula Matari and refused to pay any compensation. On 9 July, I went down to their village and taught them a lesson. We took three flintlock rifles and a dozen prisoners with us, which enabled us to impose our will on those who were reluctant.*’ (Omasombo, pp. 232-233)⁴³.

⁴³ N. R. Hunt's book is a masterpiece on Leopold II's genocide. The works and books of Adam Hochschild and Daniel Van Groenbergh, along with those of the Congo Reform Association, uniquely denounce Leopold II.

Who was the first to launch such evil rubber exploitation?

Léon Fiévez, who ruled Equateur from 1893 to 1895, launched the cruel practice of amputating the hands of Congolese who failed to bring the required rubber. Other Leopold II's agents adopted Fiévez's methods. According to Congolese oral tradition, Fiévez was nicknamed 'Ntange' (meaning 'nap' or 'bed') due to his habit of napping in the afternoon, and was described as '*the devil of the Equator*'. Furthermore, he introduced a policy requiring any soldier to prove the absence of a bullet by presenting the victim's hand. Consequently, any soldier who lost a bullet for any reason would cut off an innocent person's hand to justify this to the white commander. To force the Congolese to extract only rubber and maximise production, he destroyed their villages' crops and prevented them from fishing and hunting. The villages were rife with misery and famine, leaving everyone vulnerable to tropical diseases. Soldiers recruited for this arduous task were well-trained and would whip anyone who failed to supply the required quantity and quality of rubber. They would be thrown into solitary confinement for several days and forced to work until they returned to the forest to collect the required amount of rubber. Punitive expeditions were organised against villages that failed to deliver the specified quantities and quality of latex on the exact day and place. These villages were wiped off the map. Women, children and elders who were unable to flee ended up in dungeons, forcing men who had set sail to return and face arrest or beatings. In late 1894 alone, Fiévez's soldiers burned and looted 160 villages, resulting in the death or capture of thousands of Congolese. He suppressed local resistance and made Équateur the top rubber producer in 1895, with 650 tonnes of rubber harvested. Fiévez was finally arrested in 1899 due to his brutality and evil methods, but was acquitted and returned to Belgium in 1900. He died in 1939.

In Koli Jean Bofane's 'Cong Inc.' (extract)

"The algorithm Congo Inc. had been created when at the moment that Africa was being chopped up in Berlin between November 1884 and February 1885. Under Leopold II's sharecropping, they had hastily developed it so they could supply the whole world with rubber from the equator, without which the industrial era wouldn't have expanded as rapidly as it needed to at the time. Subsequently, its contribution to the First World War effort had been crucial, even if that war—most of it—could have

been fought on horseback, without Congo, even if things had changed since the Germans had further developed synthetic rubber in 1914. The involvement of Congo Inc. in the Second World War proved decisive. The final point had come with the concept of putting the uranium of Shinkolobwe at the disposal of the United States of America, which destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki once and for all, launching the theory of nuclear deterrence at the same time, and for all time. It contributed vastly to the devastation of Vietnam by allowing the Bell UH1-Huey helicopters, sides gaping wide, to spit millions of sprays of the copper from Likasi and Kolwezi from high in the sky over towns and countryside from Danang to Hanoi, via Hué, Vinh, Lao Cai, Lang Son, and the port of Haiphong. During the so-called Cold War, the algorithm had remained red-hot. The fuel that guaranteed proper functioning could also be made up of men. Warriors such as the Ngwaka, Mbunza, Luba, Basakata, and Lokele of Mobutu Sese Seko, like spearheads on Africa's battlefields, went to shed their blood from Biafra to Aouzou, passing through the Front Line—in front of Angola and Cuba—through Rwanda on the Byumba end in 1990. Disposable humans could also participate in the dirty work and in coups d'état. Loyal to Bismarck's testament, Congo Inc. more recently had been appointed as the accredited supplier of internationalism, responsible for the delivery of strategic minerals for the conquest of space, the manufacturing of sophisticated armaments, the oil industry, and the production of high-tech telecommunications material."

(In Koli Jean Bofane, Congo Inc. Bismarck's Testament, Marjolijn de Jager, Indiana University Press, 2018).

Are there any other accounts from witnesses?

Catholic and Protestant missionaries' diaries are valuable sources. Alfred Scrivener (1864–1919), a Protestant missionary from the BMS, who travelled to Mai-Ndombe to preach the Gospel, testified on 5 November 1904 before the Casement Inquiry Commission at Bolobo, a Protestant mission founded in 1887, that he had visited the village of Mbelo in July and August 1903, where the inhabitants trembled at the sight of a white man. The villagers recounted the legendary cruelty of the postmaster, nicknamed Malu-Malu, whose real name was Charles Massard, a Force Publique lieutenant. Scrivener observed that villages had been abandoned or emptied as

Malu-Malu had instituted a macabre regime of rubber overproduction and killed many people. One day, as the villagers failed to deliver rubber, he angrily imprisoned the village chief and armed his 17 soldiers, dividing them into three groups and emptying the village of its population. When he visited Bolobo in 1907, British Vice-Consul Armstrong reported that he spent twelve days conversing with the missionaries and natives. He noted how the population was experiencing extreme hardship; harvesting the latex from the rubber vines was a gruelling task. Those who evaded this tax were executed, their wives taken hostage and condemned to starvation. Soldiers cut off people's hands, which they brought to their white superiors as proof of their victims' deaths. Bloodshed engulfed the Congo Basin as the King's appetite for profit knew no bounds. Leopold II could not claim to be unaware of these exploitations. From 1900 to 1908, the Congo exported 5,000 tonnes of rubber each year; in 1893, one kilogram of Congolese rubber cost six gold francs, a price that doubled during the automobile boom years later.

How did Leopold II set up such ignominious exploitation?

As soon as he proclaimed himself sovereign of the EIC, Leopold II signed a decree becoming the owner of all 'vacant lands' in the Congo. However, such 'vacant lands' did not exist because clans and tribes owned all Congolese and African lands, and their boundaries were well known. From 1892 onwards, he claimed ownership of the entire Congo, including its savannahs, forests, rivers, streams, lakes and population. He made Lake Leopold II (now Lake Mai-Ndombe) his private property and named it '*Le domaine de la couronne*' (The Crown Estate), constituting one-tenth of Congo's territory, and on July 17, 1895, Leopold II issued a decree creating the Lake Leopold II district. He mortgaged the Congolese territory to exploitation and capitalist businesses: *La Société Anversoise* in the north-west of Equateur, *ABIR* in the south of Equateur, the *Compagnie du Kasai* in the now Kwilu-Kwango-Kasai, and the *Compagnie du Katanga*.

What were the consequences of Leopold II's colonisation of the Congo? Was it any different elsewhere in Africa?

Although he was absent from Berlin, Leopold II was represented by his lobbyists and supporters. During the conference, the 500 treaties that Leopold II's agents in the Congo, including Henry Morton Stanley, who, despite no longer being under contract to Leopold II, joined the American delegation. His treaties signed with traditional

chiefs⁴⁴ — ceding their lands to the king or agreeing to trade — were presented as evidence in support of granting Congo territory to Leopold II. Other Western explorers and adventurers had the same *modus operandi* in colonial Africa and beyond. Leopold II and other Europeans suddenly became landowners in Africa and, in a mocking gesture, drew up official expropriation documents. Curiously, this state of affairs seems to persist, with post-independent African politicians and expatriate businesses still behaving as if African countries are vacant lands to be negotiated without consulting the indigenous population. This is exemplified by the so-called ‘*Bakajika law*’ in the DRC, as in those years, laws were named after their proponents. On 28 May 1966, Isaac-Gérard Bakajika, a Member of Parliament, proposed ‘*la loi Bakajika*’, which President Lieutenant-General Joseph-Désiré Mobutu promulgated on 7 June 1966. It stipulated that ‘*the soil and subsoil belong to the State*’, thereby ending land expropriation through colonisation, but also dispossessed indigenous chiefs and populations of their rights on their lands, which they had owned for centuries. It explains those days’ conflicts where the government could sell lands, villages, and even cemeteries, without any indigenous consent.

In what way is this law anti-Congolese?

Traditional structures and powers are having their landholdings forcibly transferred to colonial and post-colonial African states.

The Congolese forests still have those lianas, so why can’t rubber production be as profitable as it was under Leopold II?

While it takes seven to eight years for a Hevea tree to be ready for latex production after being planted, the natural liana can be harvested immediately and requires no additional maintenance or investment. Leopold II was aware of this and pushed for rubber exploitation. However, by the time his anti-campaigns succeeded, Leopold II had already passed away, and the invention of synthetic rubber spelt the end for natural rubber profits, while the suffering and loss of lives in the Congo will never be forgotten!

⁴⁴ Stanley biographer Tim Jeal, who consulted those treaties in Tervuren Museum, said to be surprised by the difference between those signed by Stanley, where Congolese chiefs agreed to trade with the King, to those by other agents stating that they give their lands to Leopold II or to his Comité.

Ultimately, were they only Leopold II and his Belgium who profited from what Congolese author Bofane calls ‘Congo Inc’?

By no means. As he did not have enough money to invest in the Congo and also as Belgium alone could not provide the necessary manpower to exploit the Congo, Leopold II invited adventurers and mercenaries from across Europe to the Congo and cleverly opened the Congo to the world capital. Globalisation began in the Congo, with world powers acquiring stakes in Congolese businesses as agreed at the Berlin 1885 Conference: Congo was mortgaged to multinational corporations: These included the French bank *SO-COBANQUE*, the British company *Lever Brothers Limited* (which later became Unilever) and its Congolese company *Huilleries du Congo-Belge (HCB)*, which owned a tenth of the Congolese forests, the British companies *Shell* and *British Petroleum*, the American *Bank of America*, and the German *Pharmakina* plantations in Kivu. Belgium had the lion’s share, especially with its *Banque Lambert* and *Société Générale* monopoly controlling 80% of Congolese mining with its multinational *Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK)*, founded in 1909, which was the world’s largest producer of copper, zinc, cobalt, radium and so on. Also, the first Congolese diamonds were found in Tshikapa in 1907, and in Bakwanga (now Mbuji-Mayi) in 1916 and mined by the *Société Internationale Forestière et Minière (Forminière)*, founded in 1906, and the *Société Minière de Beceka (BCK)*, founded in 1919, respectively. On 13 December 1961, the two companies merged to form *Société Minière de Bakwanga (MIBA)*. After WWII, Congo exported 60% of the world’s diamonds, totalling 14,400,000 carats in 1959. About gold exploitation, the most significant gold discoveries were made near the source of the Nile, in the area between the Ituri and Haut-Uele regions within the Kilo-Moto concession, which dates back to 1905. The current Congo situation involving coltan and other minerals, a network of multinationals is exploiting via mainly neighbouring countries, Rwanda and also Uganda, and benefiting also to other clever Africans⁴⁵, as well as Congolese players themselves, while

⁴⁵ Kenya is running some banks while, for example, MONUSCO’s blue helmets logistic is based in Uganda, which Congolese should benefited if it was located in another Congolese city or place!

millions of Congolese are losing their lives, is reminiscent of the unfortunate Leopold state.

Who fought to stop the bloodiest exploitation in Congo?

Before the formal denunciation of King Leopold II, Europeans Catholic and Protestant missionaries in the Congo Free State who had witnessed these atrocities primarily reported them in private letters and missionary journals sent back to Europe. One of the first to do so was the American Protestant pastor **George Washington Williams**.

George Washington Williams (1849-1891): the pioneer

Who was he, and how did he fight for the Congolese?

After the Berlin Conference (1884–1885), Congo became the epicentre of the worldwide leaders' opinion as it was the only African country both represented and unrepresented at the conference, and which a special resolution awarded to King Leopold II of Belgium on the condition that he made it a free territory for international business. The first foreigner to live in the Congo and be shocked by Leopold II's agents' behaviour against the Congolese people, and sounded the alarm about what he described and witnessed as human rights abuse was **George Washington Williams** (Oct. 16, 1849, U.S.—Aug. 2, 1891, Blackpool, U.K.), an American historian, clergyman, politician, lawyer, lecturer, journalist and soldier who was the first black to write an objective and scientifically black people in the US researched history book. After an interview with King Leopold II, he became interested in the Congo. When in Congo in 1890, he was so shocked by Leopold II's agents' brutality to the Congolese people, and on July 18, 1890, he wrote from Stanley Falls, *'An Open Letter to His Serene Majesty Leopold II, King of the Belgians and Sovereign of the Independent State of Congo'*. In this pamphlet letter, he set out twelve points denouncing and documenting the atrocities he had witnessed. Williams concluded that all these crimes had been committed in the King's name and that he would eventually face legal consequences for his involvement in deceit, fraud, theft, arson, murder, mutilation and razzia. He urged the international community to establish a commission to investigate these allegations and prevent the Congolese from suffering and dying. To him, these blunders were *crimes against humanity*! Returning from the Congo, George Washington Williams died in Blackpool, England, en route to the USA from the Congo

in 1891. He was buried in Layton Cemetery and later remembered by the Congolese with the nickname '*Mundele Ndombe*' (black-skinned white man).

And what about the Catholics?

Let's consider the atrocities that occurred in the Mai-Ndombe. Due to its wealth or questions marks about its potential natural resources, the first Westerners who visited it, H. M. in 1882 as he wanted to unlock and solve the mystery of the only black waters he observed during his circumnavigation of the Congo River basin, Alexandre Delcommune, George Greenfell, and others advised the King, who made it his private domain, which he named '*Domaine de la Couronne*', or '*Crown Estate*', and became Leopold II's district, that the King exploited copal, ivory, and mainly his famous blood/red's rubber, and where many people had been killed or had had limbs amputated after their arms had been cut off, not to mention the drudgery they endured in paying taxes in kind by working and feeding King's agents. Special stations were established in Nioki, Kutu, Inongo, Kiri, Tolo, Nsontin, Ndojimi, Ekwayolo and Wangri. Jesuit Fathers of the Wombali Casier St-Jean parish, founded in 1802 and since relocated to the present-day city of Bandundu, were the first witnesses of those atrocities from Mai-Ndombe. They were astonished by the stories they recorded in their missionary diaries from catechumenas arriving from Lake Leopold II seeking refuge and baptism, as they were escaping inhuman treatment from Leopold II's agents. These new converts were surprised to encounter such virtuous Europeans, '*good whites*', different from those in Mai-Ndombe. As the Fathers kept receiving consistent reports of those white agents shooting villagers, soldiers cutting off innocents' hands, destroying and burning villages to exploit the rubber, a Wombali Jesuit priest was sent in 1906 to the rubber exploitation station of Inongo; travelling by a small steamboat, those whites of Leopold II Lake welcomed him coldly. After his return, the priest compiled a report for the Catholic Church hierarchy, which compelled Bishop Van Ronsley of Leopoldville, appointed by the Holy See as Apostolic Vicar of the Independent Congo in 1896, to travel with other prelates to Inongo in 1906 to witness the extent of these allegations. Unfortunately, rough conditions on the lake prevented his delegation's steamboat from reaching Inongo, and they returned to Leopoldville. And, upon returning from Wombali in 1906, Belgian Jesuit Father Arthur Vermeersch (1858–1936) of Leuven

published his book, *'La question congolaise'* (The Congolese Question), in which, documenting the stories of the local people, he emphasised the severity of the atrocities committed by Leopold's regime in the Congo. Fearing that the Jesuit Fathers, who had a reputation for being revolutionary, could establish new parishes on the estate, the King — who had agreed with the Holy See in 1888 for the Belgian Scheutist Fathers to be in charge of the western Congo vicariate — considered them more likely to over-look his agents' atrocities, requested them to settle in Mai-Ndombe. However, when those Fathers founded the first parishes of Inongo St Albert (1907), Bokoro Holy Cross (1910) and Ibeke St Theresa of Avila (1911), respectively by Fathers Emile Geens, Jules Denis and Jules Van Houtte (nicknamed 'Nkaa Yulu' or 'the elder Jules')⁴⁶, they also witnessed and recorded the atrocities of King Leopold II's regime first-hand in their missionary diaries: It was King Leopold II who stripped St Peter to dress St Paul.

Therefore, is it incorrect to suggest that the missionaries collaborated with the colonists?

No, Catholic and Protestant missionaries had their charisms: preaching the Gospel and helping other humans, their brothers and sisters. Their diaries and archives show how they reported Leopold II's atrocities. Although Congo Free State's agents welcomed them upon their arrival, the Catholic and Protestant missionaries worked hard so that, after a few years, they were able to sustain and feed themselves. However, it was the British Edmund Dene Morel who launched the most successful anti-Leopold II campaign.

Edmund Dene Morel and the Congo Reform Association

Who was Morel, and what was his revolutionary Congo Reform Association?

Around 1890, Leopold II agreed with the Liverpool-based shipping company Elder Dempster to handle all transport to and from the Congo. This involved shipping goods and workers from Belgium to the Congo, and commodities and natural resources

⁴⁶ Professor Jean Omasombo's book, *Mai-Ndombe*, contains interesting pages from Father Jules Van Houtte's missionary diaries describing Leopold II's agent atrocities, evidence against the cliché that missionaries were colonial agents: Protestant and Catholic missionaries launched the first anti-Léopold II denunciations.

from the Congo to Belgium. In 1891, the company appointed Georges Edmond Achille Morel (10 July 1873 – 12 November 1924) as a clerk working in Liverpool and the Belgian port of Antwerp. Morel was born in Paris to an English mother and a French father. After attending boarding schools in Eastbourne and Bedford, he returned to Paris in 1888 to work as a bank clerk, adopted his mother's British citizenship, changed his name to Edmund Dene Morel and married Mary Richardson in 1896. They had five children together. While overseeing shipments between Liverpool and Antwerp, Morel noticed suspicious activities: ships bound for the Congo were loaded with war materials and firearms and escorted by soldiers, while those returning were filled with rubber, ivory, and other resources. As a journalist, he started investigating and was shocked to learn, especially from missionaries, how Congolese were being exploited and killed for the King's rubber. Concluding that human rights abuses occurred in Leopold's Congo, Edmund Morel decided to take action, surprised by such an international *omertà*.

What did he do next?

After confronting his Antwerp observations with his boss in Liverpool upon his return, Morel resigned in 1901 and even turned down a job promotion in exchange for his silence. He then returned home to his Welsh village of Hawarden, not far from Liverpool. In 1903, with financial backing from his mentor, the Liverpool businessman John Holt, Morel published the *West African Mail*, a newspaper that exposed Leopold II's atrocities in the Congo. He held public conferences, gaining the support of British MPs such as Sir Charles Dilke and anti-slavery societies. Morel successfully campaigned for the Congolese cause, continuing to publish carefully researched and documented stories based on the testimony and letters of missionaries working in and returning from the Congo.

What was Morel's strategy for achieving his goal?

He lobbied for the Congolese people suffering under Leopold II's regime and quickly attracted famous writers and statesmen who supported him. With the backing of his allies in the British Parliament, Morel secured his first victory when the '*Congolese question*' was placed on the British Westminster Parliament's agenda. In May 1903, Parliament unanimously passed a resolution and injunction to Leopold II — the cousin of British King Edward VII — stating that '*the natives of the Congo should be governed with*

humanity'. This was a blow to Leopold II. As the United Kingdom is a great power, its parliament's decision had the force of law and served as counter-propaganda for Leopold II's Congo business. Following this decision, the London Foreign Office appointed a new Consul of His Majesty in the Congo Free State, Roger Casement, of Irish origin, baptised Catholic, who grew up in County Antrim (Ulster) in Northern Ireland, previously worked in Congo with Henry Morton Stanley when he was making his Matadi-Leopoldville road, and was already working in the Boma consulate. Casement was tasked with investigating Morel's accusations against King Leopold II and his agents in the Congo. He left Boma for Leopoldville in March 1903, and quickly travelled within the Congo, interviewing people, writing down stories, witnessing atrocities, and visiting martyred villages such as Bolobo, Bobangi, Lokolela and Irebu. Roger Casement finally concluded: *'I had stumbled upon a secret society of assassins headed by a king'*.

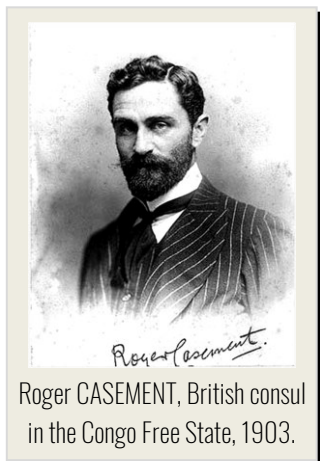
What did he do when he returned to Britain?

While working on his report, Roger Casement met Edmund Morel in London on 10 December 1903. Morel had travelled straight from his home in Hawarden, North Wales. They both sympathised with the Congolese cause and decided to work together. Casement later visited Morel in Hawarden, persuading him to set up an organisation and offering him £100 for that purpose. While Morel was reluctant, his wife was convinced by Casement's suggestion, which he ultimately accepted, too. In a 25 January 1904 letter to Morel, Casement set out the organisational plan for him, and Morel finally co-founded the **Congo Reform Association (CRA)** with **Dr Henry Grattan Guinness**, son of the famous Irish-born pastor Henry Grattan Guinness Sr (founder of the LIM; while Guinness Jr founded the Congo Balolo Mission) launched on **23 March 1904**, at the **Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool**. Sponsored by **William Cadbury**, a Birmingham cocoa millionaire, and supported by the Aborigines Protection Society, the CRA became the first human rights movement of the twentieth century. Its objective was to campaign against Leopold II's atrocities and the suffering of the Congolese people. VIPs attended the event, and the crowd was galvanised as Morel, who delivered

'*The Congo Atrocity Lantern*' lecture, consisting of slides featuring photographs of mutilated Congolese.

What happened later to Morel's mentor, Roger Casement?

The Casement titled "*Report of His Majesty's Consul on the Administration of the Congo Free State*," of 40 pages, was presented to the British Parliament in 1904 and detailed horrific abuses, killings, mutilations, and forced labour, King Leopold II's agents were inflicted to Congolese. It was a published, uncompromising '*Casement Report*' or '*Congo Report*'. The scale of the reported and evidenced behaviours of King Leopold II's brutal agents shocked Casement, who finally concluded that Morel was telling the truth: Leopold II's exploitation of the Congo was inhumane. The British Parliament voted in favour of a resolution demanding that Leopold II cease the atrocities and treat the Congolese people as humans. And,



Casement's report, which broke the usual ongoing omertà, contributed to King Leopold II adopting a low-profile approach and changing his Congolese policies and politics.

What were the CRA's victories and successes?

Morel's approach was novel in that he created brands such as '**Red Rubber**' and '**the Congo Reform Association**', as well as the **Western Mail** newspaper, to raise awareness of his human rights campaign for the Congolese. He also lobbied high-profile individuals from many backgrounds to support the Congo's cause. After touring Britain, Morel turned his attention to the USA. As the USA was the first country to recognise the Congo Free State at the Berlin Conference, he believed that it also had a moral obligation to stop Leopold II's exploitation of the Congo. He travelled there for conferences and press briefings. In September 1904, US President Theodore Roosevelt welcomed Morel to the White House, a significant victory for Morel and the CRA. Following the publication of his newspaper articles and books, particularly *Red Rubber* in 1906, Morel achieved another victory by successfully organising an anti-Leopold II rally at London's Royal Albert Hall on **19 November 1909**. Chaired by the Archbishop of

Canterbury, Dr Randall Davidson, the rally was attended by clergy and prominent activists. It raised awareness of the atrocities inflicted on the Congolese people under Leopold II's brutal regime.

What was the secret to Morel's success?

Morel used his journalistic skills to mobilise, particularly VIPs, and his association gathered authors, celebrities, politicians, and religious leaders from Europe and America for the Congolese included: Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens' pen name), who wrote the political satire *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905); the American civil rights advocate and educator Booker T. Washington; The famous British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes, published *The Crime of the Congo* (1909); the American missionary to the Congo William Morrison; and the British Congo Consul Roger Casement, who investigated and reported Leopold II's atrocities in the Congo to the British Parliament. Other notable figures include the French poet, journalist and Nobel Prize winner for Literature Anatole France; the American naturalist, educator and eugenicist David Starr Jordan, who founded Stanford University; and Joseph Conrad, author of *Heart of Darkness*. The brutality and oppression inflicted by Leopold in the Congo sparked worldwide outrage and attracted the attention of the international press. To intensify the pressure, gather evidence and inform the world about Leopold's atrocities, and to prevent a void from forming, Edmund Dene Morel collaborated with missionaries from and in the Congo, including the African-American Presbyterian minister William Sheppard, the British couple John and Alice Seeley Harris who were pioneering documentary photographers and used a Kodak Brownie camera to capture Leopold II's human rights abuses, and the Dane Congo Balolo lay missionary Jacob Danielsen photographs of Congolese victims and who organised the first anti-Leopold II conferences in Scotland. Morel gained recognition through his books *The British Case in French Congo* (1903), *King Leopold's Rule in Africa* (1904), and *Red Rubber*. And his organisation continued to campaign against King Leopold II and for the Congolese people to be treated as humans.

What happened to the CRA later on?

The CRA held its last meeting on **16 June 1913** at the Westminster Palace Hotel in London. According to the latest reports, there have been improvements in the Congo since it was handed over to

Belgium in 1908. Although Edmund Morel never visited the Congo himself, he ran his Congo Reform Association as a respectable organisation, knowing that opposing a king was no laughing matter. Morel's words remain relevant and thought-provoking: *'It will take two generations to heal the wounds inflicted on the Congo.'*

Were there others who fought against Leopold II?

More specifically, the Catholic and Protestant missionaries devoted their lives to serving the Congolese people, while also bearing witness to and reporting on Leopold II's genocide. One such missionary was Alice Seeley Harris (1870–1970), the wife of Reverend John Harris. The couple worked in the Congo as Congo Balolo Missionaries (CBM) and lived in the station/parish/mission/village of Baringa, near the town of Basankusu, in the basin of the Lopori and Maringa rivers, where the Anglo-Belgian India Rubber Company (ABIR) owned a large plot of forest land. Alice, a photographer, used a small Kodak Brownie camera to capture the events unfolding around her. On the morning of 14 May 1904, two boys arrived to inform her that a massacre had occurred near the village of Wala and that two men were on their way to the mission with evidence. When they arrived, one of the men, Nsala, was carrying a small bundle of papers. Alice was horrified when she opened it and discovered the severed hand and foot of Nsala's five-year-old daughter, Boali. Another minister present, Stannard, described the scene as awful in a letter. Alice photographed Mr Nsala with his daughter's body parts posed on the veranda of his house. The astonishing story was that ABIR agents had killed 80 people, among them were Boali and Bonginganoa, Nsala's daughter and wife. Her pictures were shared in Europe, and Morel published them in his books *'King Leopold's Rule in Africa'* and *'Red Rubber'*. Upon returning to England in 1906, the Harrises toured the UK and the US with their 'magic lantern' slides, giving lectures about the Congo.



Congolese Nsala contemplating the severed limbs of
his five-year-old daughter, Boali, Harris, 1904

Are there any other lesser-known voices opposing Leopold II?

Two of Leopold II's most vocal critics were the Franco-Italian explorer Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza (1852–1905) and the Belgian diplomat Jules Marchal (1924–2003). Inspired by Stanley's exploits, De Brazza explored Gabon and present-day Congo-Brazzaville on behalf of France. In 1883, he founded the town of Brazzaville near the village of Mbe, home to the federal chief of the Bateke, Makoko Iloo. De Brazza signed a land cession treaty with Makoko, but did not reveal it to Stanley when he visited him near Vivi. When the latter learned it, the race for the Congo River Pool had begun, with Stanley backing Makoko's agents on the left bank. Ngaliem.a, who revolted against Makoko, proclaimed himself chief of the left bank and signed a treaty with Stanley, to whom he offered lands to establish the Leopoldville new station. The founding of these two cities, Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) and Brazzaville, was marked by rivalry between their two founders. Marchal claimed that the legislation of the Congo Free State treated the Congolese as '*slaves in the truest sense of the word*', and revealed that Leopold II was aware of these atrocities. He also claimed that Leopold II's Congo enterprise was not spreading civilisation to the heart of Africa, since it was not building schools or hospitals commensurate with the profits made from exploitation. Marchal also confirmed that hands were amputated to force the Congolese to collect rubber and that the first agent to use this practice was the Belgian Léon Fiévez in 1894. Another important figure who is not so well known is **Daniel Jacob Nielsen**.

Which action was he specifically involved in?

In 1901, the Dane lay missionary engineer Daniel Jacob Danielsen (Copenhagen, June 25, 1871 – Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, October 16, 1916) served as a lay missionary engineer for the Congo Balolo Mission (CBM), which was founded by the Irish Baptist missionary John McKittrick in 1888. Based in Bonginda in the Equator Province, Danielsen was in charge of the missionaries' small steamboat. While investigating in the Congo and keen to be independent, Casement signed Danielsen into a contract so that he could be in charge of the American Protestant missionary steamboat he had rented, free from the support and river-travelling facilities of the Congo Free State. While accompanying Casement, Danielsen witnessed and listened to the investigation interviews of Congolese victims and photographed those who had been amputated. He returned to Britain in October 1903, a month ahead of Casement, who arrived in December. Surprised with the London's Protestant headquarters' silence attitude, playing Pontius Pilate, even after he denounced atrocities he witnessed. As he understood how their responsible feared that the King could hinder their evangelisation work and make life difficult for them, Danielsen decided to use the press. Supporting by his friends, he organised two major conferences in Edinburgh on 7 and 8 November 1903. These were the first in Europe to display photographs of the atrocities committed by Leopold II's agents. The media covered the conferences extensively, and Danielsen wrote: *'Several natives asked me, before I left for home, if I could inform the good white men in the far-off country of their difficult circumstances and ask them to deliver them from their taskmasters. With God's assistance, I will disseminate information about the horrific slavery prevalent in the Congo State to as many people as possible. If this atrocious administration continues much longer, whole districts will become depopulated in a few years.'* He reiterated that the rubber's tax to the Congolese were the root of the problem. Despite his lack of fame, Danielsen deserves recognition as a prominent witness and earliest to denounce Leopold II in Europe. He shared evidence with Morel.

What were the final years of Morel and Casement's lives like?

Casement's report was the first well-documented piece of fieldwork to involve interviews with innocent Congolese victims and confrontations with the agents of Leopold II that Casement encountered. It also included accounts from missionary witnesses that Casement interviewed. His conclusion left no room for doubt. Even when

Leopold II subsequently organised a commission of enquiry to play down the facts, the impact of Casement's report and Morel's work forced the King to adopt a low profile, particularly given that Western public opinion was now well-informed. After Leopold II's campaigns, a prominent pacifist and anti-war activist, Edmund Morel, was involved since 1911 for the UK's neutrality, especially when the First World War started, and opposed the war itself. He was imprisoned for six months from 1917 to 1918 due to his anti-war activism, which negatively impacted his health until his death. After the war, he severely criticised the *Treaty of Versailles* (1919), warning that the frustrations it created would lead to another great war — a prediction later proven correct by the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1918, Morel joined the Independent Labour Party and, in 1922, defeated Winston Churchill to become MP for Dundee (along with Edwin Scrimgeour). Having been re-elected in 1924, Morel suffered a fatal heart attack in London and died in North Bovey, a village on the southeastern side of Dartmoor National Park in Teignbridge, Devon, near the city of Exeter, on 12 November 1924, aged 51. He was cremated at Golders Green Crematorium in London. His benefactor, Roger Casement, met an unfortunate end. In 1905, his report on Leopold II's atrocities in the Congo Free State earned him honours, and he was knighted in 1911. After completing his Congo mission, as an Irish freedom fighter, he resumed the cause he had been fighting for since: the struggle for Irish independence from Britain. And, during the First World War, he smuggled arms from Germany to Irish independence fighters to use against the British, and he was finally arrested in 1916, imprisoned in London's Pentonville Prison, ennobled and sentenced to death. Despite appeals for clemency from prominent figures, he was hanged on 3 August 1916 and buried in the prison cemetery. It was in 1965 that his remains were repatriated, received an official funeral and was buried in Dublin's Glasnevin Cemetery; his grave, number 1, is located at the entrance to the cemetery. In the Republic of Ireland, which gained independence from the UK on 6 December 1921 when the two states signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty after Ireland unilaterally declared independence on 21 January 1919, Casement is celebrated as a hero of Irish independence.

Are there any other Congolese fighters whose stories deserve to be told?

Yes. Western mercenaries and adventurers seeking financial gain populated the Congo Free State. For example, between 1880 and 1914, 200 of the 2,000 Europeans living in the Congo were Swiss. One of these was Daniel Bresot from Neuchâtel, who arrived in 1897 but resigned the following year in disgust at the barbarity of Leopold II's agents. As a member of the Swiss League for the Protection of Indigenous Peoples, he published an anti-Leopold II pamphlet entitled '*Sous la chicote. Sous la chicote. Nouvelles congolaises*'.

But what about the Congolese people themselves? Did they revolt against the inhumane exploitation of the rubber industry?

Throughout the Congo and all over Africa, there are thousands of stories about resistance fighters and people who refused slavery, the slave trade, colonisation and forced labour, even under Leopold II's regime. One of the most notable groups of resistance fighters is the '*Women of Nder*' from Senegal's Walo region. On 7 March 1820, they fought against Maur slave traders who had come to kidnap them while their husbands were away. After intense fighting with whatever weapons they could find, including knives, machetes and guns, they used as men, the women ultimately chose to immerse themselves in a fire rather than risk arrest and enslavement by the invaders. Only one pregnant woman survived to testify to their bravery. In South Africa, Shaka Zulu (1787–1828) fiercely opposed the European invaders who had invaded his Zulu kingdom. Nineteenth-century Black African fighters such as Lat Dior, Samory Touré, Béhanzin, Rabah and Prempeh fought against colonisation in Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, Benin, Chad and Ghana, respectively. We also remember Queen Nzinga of Angola, who fought against the Portuguese, as she led an army of young women skilled in the use of bows and poisoned arrows. The Amazons, a contingent of female soldiers from the Kingdom of Dahomey, are well known. So too are the Congolese of Maniema, who made their land impenetrable to foreigners after suffering the horrors of the Arab slave trade. The famous Arab slave trader Tippu Tip, who terrorised eastern Congo, refused to accompany Stanley from Nyangwe on his journey when he heard that the men of Maniema were cannibals. Stanley then decided to sail down the river, a risky decision as no one had ever explored it before.

The Batetela and Bampende revolts during the Belgian colonisation of the Congo are famous tales of bravery.

Are there well-known stories from the Mai-Ndombe?

My late father often spoke of the '*bengaa*' or '*bengringri*': Bulamatari's soldiers (slave traders or colonisers?), nicknamed for the sound of their boots, sowed terror wherever they went. They were more successful operating in the forest regions than in the savannahs, where people could easily spot strangers and check their identity from a distance. In the forest villages connected by footpaths, people had little time to flee when these genocidaires suddenly appeared. In those forest villages, fighters hid and killed those invaders with poisoned arrows and spears. The current practice in that region of sweeping and cleaning the ashes from where the fire is lit in the morning, around which everyone gathers, dates back to those dark times of the '*Bengringri/Bengba*'. When they found an empty village, they would bury gunpowder and cartridges in the fireplace, intending to kill everyone gathered around the wood fire with an explosion when they arrived and set a wood fire in the morning to warm themselves or to cook meals.

Did Mai-Ndombe easily accept the colonial facts as a curse



Nsontin, from left to right: Monkajuu Sola, President Joseph Mobutu, Nsinga Udjuu Joseph & Nsinga Albert

against which they were powerless?

There are also renowned resistance stories in the Mai-Ndombe region: Leopold II's agents were even assassinated. One of them was Mr Lohman, a Dane nicknamed '*Lekukoi*', a wasp in Kisakata,

because of his legendary meanness, and also because he was very thin. The ‘Nkemambee’ (equivalent of Dukes, ambassadors of the Sakata king, ‘Mojuu’) murdered him by having a spear thrust into his chest, at the village of Boyon in 1908. He was later buried in the whites’ Kutu’s cemetery, mortgaged since, near the football stadium. The Basakata had had enough of him, as he always bullied and whipped them and was never satisfied with the quality of tax rubber brought to him. There is also the story of one of the Basakata ruler king ‘*Mojuu itwi*’ of the Mbamoshie chiefdom, **Utsr Augustin**, the late grandfather of the late Auxiliary Bishop of Kinshasa, Eugène Moke Motsuri, and of the late Cardinal of Kinshasa, Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya. Having been baptised by the Jesuits in Wombali with his brother-in-law Nsinga Albert⁴⁷, husband to his sister Unkajuu Sola and father to the late Honourable Minister Nsinga Udjuu Joseph, he had become one of Leopold II’s rubber-collecting agents when he returned to the Basakata lands, where he was also one of the crowned and medalled chiefs in his native chieftaincy of Mbamoshie. Since they ruled Africa, Westerns introduced recognition medals for the traditional chiefs, which the latter adopted and included till those days as a symbol of power. The Basakata called it: ‘**mplata**’. As Utsr was speaking Kikongo, the vernacular administration and evangelisation language at the time, and, as he also carried guns, he no longer respected his fellow chiefs and kings, or ‘*bajuu*,’ of the other Basakata’s chiefdoms/chieftains, ‘*majuu*’ in Kisakata. Consequently, neighbours’ chiefs from the Mbanzankwi chiefdom became angry and decided to assassinate him. They speared him in Nsontin chapel⁴⁸, where Utsr jumped to hide. The

⁴⁷ After establishing Bokoro parish in 1910 for the Basakata from Mushie, among the Baboma-Banunu, to Oshwe, among the Nkundo, the Catholic Father Jules Denis, the apostle of the Basakata, was once stopped on his journey cycling and passing the village of Nsontin, an extra traditional rubber collection centre, by a young man wearing a manufactured cloth (‘*ipapula*’), rare at the time. This was Nsinga Albert, married after to Munkajuu Sola. According to Jules Denis in his booklet ‘*Baba ne Menangie*’ (On the Way to Menangie), short stories in Kisakata to teach writing and reading: ‘*Ijuu le Mbamoshie, bankajuu vuku*’ (Mbamoshwe chiefdom has many queen mothers).

⁴⁸ Father Denis later appointed Nsinga Albert the first catechist among the Basakata and built a chapel with a bell tower in Nsontin. In 1919, Nsinga married Monkadjuu in a religious ceremony in Bokoro. On their fiftieth wedding anniversary, their son Joseph Nsinga Udjuu, by then a central government minister, organised the most memorable celebrations among the Basakata in

irony of fate was that the chapel's catechist was Utsr's brother-in-law, Nsinga Albert. Even Henry Morton Stanley was not welcome when he first explored the Mai-Ndombe in 1882, as the local people were hostile to foreigners due to their suffering at the hands of the slave trade. He was refused permission to dock at Mushie, where he was greeted by over 500 Baboma warriors, armed with spears and arrows, ready to attack him. He weighed anchor and later met Ngakabe, the queen of the Baboma/Banunu, on her large canoe on the river. While circumnavigating the lake, Henry Morton Stanley's steamer was attacked by Selenge's paddlers armed with spears and arrows in pirogues. He escaped with his life only because he fired shots into the air and sailed off to the dock at Inongo, where he met the Chief of the Ntomb'e Njale and made a blood pact with him — a ritual that Stanley performed with every chief he met as a sign of non-aggression. This method worked for Stanley and also explains his explorations' exploits. As Stanley travelled to the Mai-Ndombe with the Dane steamboat commandant Christophersen and Congo Free State agents speaking Kikongo, the then official language, they named those waters 'Masa Ndombe' (black water), which was transformed to 'Mai', meaning water, while 'Ndombe', black in Lingala, remains: the name Mai-Ndombe is a mix of two languages: Lingala and Kikongo; what reminds us of the time when, upon gaining power in 1983, President Thomas Sankara changed the name of their country from Haute-Volta (Upper Volta) to Burkina Faso (The land and country of men of integrity) in 1984.

From the Congo Free State to the Belgian Congo

How did Leopold II react to the Casement Report?

Because of these denunciations, the shock of Casement's report, and pressure from public opinion, Leopold II attempted to appease

Nsontin, where even President Mobutu was invited and immortalised in Franco Luambo's OK Jazz song '*Obwa oshuu nzem*' (Having children is worth more than money), written by Vincent Monsemvula. The importance of this festival also lay in the fact that it was a rare occasion when all the '*bajuu*' (king-chiefs) of all the federated chiefdoms of the Basakata were present, along with their notables: *Mv'la* (sons of the Bajuu), *Ngwe* (grandsons of the Bajuu), *Nkemambee* (special envoys/dukes/a *missus dominicus*), and even their *Mbianshuu* (contes/inviolables), *Nshwe* (brothers-in-law) and *Le-say* (step brothers). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twm-Slj_5tY, <https://www.facebook.com/Chairman01/videos/10158612781909394>.

his critics and counter Morel's allegations and Casement's report by sending his commission of enquiry to the Congo, chaired by the Belgian Émile Janssens. However, the balance had already swung heavily in Morel's favour that it had little impact, and he had no choice but to cede the Congo Free State to Belgium. The exploitation of the Congo enabled Leopold II to fulfil his dream: he became the richest monarch, built a modern Brussels and refurbished and rehabilitated Laeken Castle and other monuments.

What did King Leopold II do next?

The handover of the Congo to Belgium began with Leopold II's 1889 will, in which he requested a loan from the Belgian government to fund his endeavours in the Congo Free State. It stated that upon his death, the King would bequeath all of his Congo Free State sovereign rights to Belgium. On 5 July 1890, Belgium loaned the EIC 25,000,000 francs, on the condition that the King's debt would be cancelled and the Congo could be annexed after ten years. However, when Belgium sought to exercise this right in 1901, Leopold II recommended waiting until the Congo became profitable, thereby avoiding the inheritance of a loss-making territory. As anti-Leopold campaigning increased, twelve Belgian ministers and secretaries-general finally signed the **'Treaty of Cession of the Independent State of the Congo to Belgium'** in French and Dutch on 28 November 1907 in Brussels. Consisting of four articles across five pages, it is a reciprocal commitment between Belgium and Leopold II, the owner of the EIC, ceding to Belgium the soil, subsoil, resources, and everything else, with no mention of the Congolese people⁴⁹. Its first article states: *'His Majesty the Sovereign King declares that he cedes to Belgium the sovereignty of the territories making up the Congo Free State, with all the rights and obligations attached thereto.'* Thus, Belgium became the metropolis of a territory eighty times its size, with all its attendant challenges, debts, profits and potential. The Congolese people became Belgian subjects rather than citizens by accident, until 30 June 1960. On 20 August and 9 September 1908, the Belgian parliament and senate passed the **Act of Transfer** bill. The Ministry of Colonies was established on 30 October 1908. The King appointed Belgian Jules Renkin as its first minister, and Belgium endowed its new colony with a constitution, **'La Loi Fondamentale'**, also known as the **'Colonial Charter'** or the 'Law on

⁴⁹ Cf. The treaty is on page 228-229 of this book.

the Government of the Belgian Congo', which Leopold II promulgated on 18 October 1908. On 15 November 1908, the Etat Independent du Congo (EIC)/Congo Free State (CFS) officially became a Belgian colony named '**le Congo Belge**' (the Belgian Congo/Belgisch Congo), the move celebrated with a banquet at the Cercle Africain in Brussels on 21 November. Leopold II died at Laeken Palace on 17 December 1909, and stated before, *'I will give them my Congo, but they have no right to know what I did there.'* Smoke from the burning EIC archives billowed from the palace chimneys for four days and nights, casting a shadow over his Congo's years.

But Leopold II was not only infamous for his rubber business.

No, he also profited from the sale of Congolese ivory and skins of rare animals, such as leopards. The Congolese were also forced to feed State agents with cassava and other food, to the point of starving themselves. Leopold II also traded natural tax-collected copal from the Congo, and benefited from stolen artefacts for his Tervuren Museum. An example of such an object is the fetish or religious statuette *'Kitumba de Ne Cuco'*, which the Belgian Alexandre Delcommune stole from the King of the Bakongo near the city of Boma in 1878, and offered it to Leopold II for his museum in Tervuren. Delcommune himself wrote, *'In the distance, we could hear heavy gunfire, indicating that my colleagues were also grappling with the villages they were charged with attacking. Scattered bodies indicated that the natives had been surprised by our men's commotion in several places simultaneously. The result was a general stampede of Ne Cuco's warriors. During the pursuit, my men found the large war fetish, which must have been carried away in the initial attack and, when the bearers found themselves in close quarters, no doubt thrown into the bushes. This fetish was one of the most famous idols in the whole region. Standing 1.2 metres high, it had a well-proportioned, very well-sculpted head; however, its disproportionately large trunk encroached on the length of its legs, giving the idol a grotesque appearance overall. Its trunk and the arms joining it at the leg level were covered in nails of various shapes and sizes, as well as knife blades, daggers, small fetishes, red and yellow copper rings, iron rings, and amulets. I had known about this fetish for a long time and was aware of its great reputation twenty or thirty leagues away.'* (Mbu-Mputu, 2019: 234). Other European colonists in Africa did the same before these items ended up in museums and collections.

Did the Congolese and their traditional chiefs always welcome Leopold's agents' expeditions?

Not at all. These expeditions were acts of war and vandalism: they killed and imprisoned people, and destroyed property, just as colonialists did in all colonised countries. One of Leopold II's dark conquests occurred in a territory the natives called Garénganze and the



Swahili-speaking Katanga, where Mwenda Ngelengwa Shitambi, King of the Bayeke, ruled, resisted and determined to maintain his independence and protect his people. When, finally, the Belgians gave him 24 hours to agree to serve Leopold II, M'Siri refused, stating '*Sumbwa Kufwa*' ('*Better to die than to be a slave*'). The Belgian captain, Omer Bodson, then shot him dead on 20 December 1891. This occurred after M'Siri's favourite wife, Maria da Fonseca, a Portuguese-Angolan, betrayed him by revealing his fetish secret to the Belgians: M'Siri could only die if he was

shot in the head and had his little finger cut off. Prince Masuka, M'Siri's son, took revenge by murdering Bodson on the spot. According to legend, M'Siri was buried without his head, which continued to speak even after being separated from his body. On the way to deliver the head to Leopold II as a war trophy, as was customary, it was left somewhere on the roadside, as it continued to speak. Some believe it was buried in Bunkeya, while others claim it is still in the cellars of the Tervuren museum in Belgium. The assassination brought an end to the wealthiest monarchy and most organised kingdom, opening Katanga to Leopold II, which only became part of the Congo Free State in 1910.

Does the DRC remain Belgium's main economic source?

Leopold II exploited the Congo for its lucrative rubber resources. Following suit, Belgium exploited the Congolese soil, particularly the subsoil, for its copper, diamonds, cobalt, tin, zinc, coal, uranium and timber. This was based on an observation by Belgian geologist Jules Cornet during his 1892 trip to Katanga, which he described as

a ‘*geological scandal*’⁵⁰. The Belgian Congo supported Belgium throughout its history, assisting in kind and cash, particularly during the two World Wars. For example, the United States of America purchased Congolese uranium from Belgium to make the first atomic bomb dropped on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6, and 9 August 1945, respectively. Although Belgium improved upon Leopold II’s methods, much of Congo’s exploitation remained unchanged, the Congolese endured forced labour and taxation, Belgium enjoyed the profits and resources, and the ‘Force Publique’ continued its inhumane treatment of the Congolese, who only benefited from minor social changes such as a healthcare system to combat tropical diseases, the construction of schools, roads and hospitals, and an administration with a monetary system and regular salaries. Natural parks were established for wild animals,

⁵⁰ The DRC top 100 minerals. *Precious metals and gemstones*: 1. Gold, 2. Diamond, 3. Silver, 4. Platinum, 5. Beryl (emerald and aquamarine), 6. Amethyst, 7. Sapphire, 8. Tourmaline, 9. Amblygonite, 10. Gem quartz. *Strategic and technological metals*: 11. Cobalt, 12. Copper, 13. Coltan (Niobium + Tantalum), 14. Cassiterite (tin), 15. Wolframite (tungsten). 16. Zinc. 17. Nickel, 18. Manganese, 19. Lithium, 20. Germanium. *Rare and radioactive metals*: 21. Uranium, 22. Billietite, 23. Gauthierite, 24. Sklodowskite, 25. Soddyite, 26. Demesmaeckerite, 27. Vandenbrandeite, 28. Wakefieldite, 29. Upalite, 30. Pyrochlore. *Building materials and industrial minerals*: 31. Bauxite, 32. Limestone, 33. Granite, 34. Marble, 35. Kaolin, 36. Sandstone, 37. Clay, 38. Bituminous shale, 39. Silica, 40. Gypsum. *Heavy metals and industrial by products*: 41. Lead, 42. Bismuth, 43. Cadmium, 44. Chromium, 45. Iron, 46. Hematite, 47. Goethite, 48. Trogtalite, 49. Carrollite, 50. Connellite. *Rare and scientific specimens*: 51. Libethenite, 52. Briartite, 53. Kirschsteinite, 54. Oosterboschite, 55. Vaesite, 56. Zairite, 57. Gerhardite, 58. Verbeekite, 59. Chrisstanleyite, 60. Gallite. *Useful chemical components and derivatives*: 61. Baryte, 62. Talc, 63. Feldspar, 64. Mica (biotite and muscovite), 65. Amphibole, 66. Pyroxene, 67. Sedimentary quartz, 68. Diatomite, 69. Saltite, 70. Malachite. *Civil engineering rocks and minerals*: 71. Asphaltite, 72. Ochre, 73. Arkose, 74. Salt rocks, 75. Phosphate rocks, 76. Magnetite, 77. Dolomite, 78. Chlorite, 79. Stilbite (zeolite), 80. Serpentine. *Volcanic and metamorphic minerals*: 81. Sillimanite, 82. Andalusite, 83. Rutile, 84. Ilmenite, 85. Apatite, 86. Alunite, 87. Anatase, 88. Perlite, 89. Olivine, 90. Pyrite. *Other fine and decorative stones*: 91. Calcite, 92. Cuprite, 93. Chalcocopyrite, 94. Smithsonite, 95. Azurite, 96. Rhodonite, 97. Lazurite, 98. Likasite, 99. Opal, 100. Obsidian (A list copied from a posting). Alas, nowhere in the Congo is there a special museum dedicated to its subsoil resources samples, and its geological mapping requires an update.

and small-scale economic projects were carried out, even if they did not match the Belgian profits⁵¹.

Congo, a WWI and WWII ally, and the Cold War later

How did the decolonisation process in the Congo unfold, and what triggered its independence?

Both internal and external events contributed to the Congo's struggle for independence. These included the return of Congolese Second World War veterans, who had witnessed the vulnerability of white men and realised that Belgium was not as strong as it seemed, and also the French General Charles de Gaulle's speech in Brazzaville on 30 January 1944, where he thanked the Africans as they helped France to win the war and declared them citizens of the French Union. The UN creation in 1945, and Indonesia's independence on 17 August 1945 (the first country to gain independence from Japanese occupation since 1942, ending Dutch colonisation that began in 1816 when the Netherlands) pushed for African independence. Other factors were the independence of Egypt, Pakistan, Tunisia and Morocco; the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, from 18 to 24 April 1955, laying the foundations for the Non-Aligned Movement, launched in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, on 1 September 1961; the 1958's Brussels World Fair, attended by 600 Congolese people, who spent months in Belgium and were thus exposed to the outside world; the independence of Ghana in 1957 and Guinea in 1958, and the Kwame Nkrumah's All-African Conference in Accra, Ghana, in October 1958, the Congolese Patrice Lumumba, Gaston Diomi and Joseph Ngalula attended. This conference allowed Lumumba to wear the pan-African and independence suit. Internally in the Congo also, there was the establishment of the first Catholic university, Lovanium, in Leopoldville in 1954 and the Official University of Elisabethville in 1956; the accession to the Belgian throne of

⁵¹ As Hitler died on 30 April 1945 and Germany already signed its surrender in two stages — in Reims, France, at 02:41 on 7 May 1945, to take effect at 23:01 on 8 May, in Berlin on 8 May 1945 (9 May Moscow time) — meant the use of the atomic bomb was not justified. Even if Japan resisted, it was losing on all fronts. Some believe that the new US President, Truman, decided it use to demonstrate that the US was the world's sole master, in light of the polarisation that was about to take place with the end of the war. Unfortunately, spies and double agents already sold the bomb formula to the Russians, who manufactured it in 1949, much to the surprise of the Americans.

King Baudouin, who introduced new independence ideas, and his first visit to the Congo in 1955, where he was warmly welcomed and nicknamed 'Bwana Kitoko' (the beautiful boy); and the formation of the first Congolese political parties: The ABAKO (Alliance of Bakongo) in 1955 and the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), whose presidents were Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba respectively.

How did the Congo become involved in WW1 and WW2?

Belgium called on its colony, the Congo Free State, which had joined the Allies in the First World War, to deny Germany access to its African colonies and resource supply sites. However, the Belgian Congo was forced to defend itself when German ships bombarded the Congolese ports of Mokolobu, south of Uvira, on 15 August, and Lukunga the following week, and after the Germans seized the island of Idjwi on Lake Kivu. This broke the Belgian Congo's neutrality, which it had upheld in the Congo River basin following the 1885 General Act of Berlin, except in self-defence. In October 1915, the Belgian Congo launched an offensive in West Africa to support the French and British troops. They attacked German Cameroon, capturing Sangha and Yaoundé in January 1916. In response, the Germans attacked and drove back the British in Rhodesia, and, at the British's request, the Congolese 'Force Publique' liberated Northern Rhodesia from the Germans in November 1917 and its most significant operation, however, was the conquest of Deutsch-Ost Afrika (German East Africa), which began in April 1916. During this campaign, the Force Publique introduced new military tactics to Africa by deploying collapsible boats and sea-planes. In 1916, when German forces attacked the Belgian Congo from Rwanda in an attempt to seize the Kilo-Moto gold mines, 15,000 Congolese soldiers counterattacked and seized Kigali on 9 May, Usumbura (now Bujumbura) on 6 June, Kitega in Tanzania on 17 June and the capture of the port of Kigoma and the town of Ujiji at the end of July. After an 18-day battle, the Germans were defeated at Usoke in Itaga, north of Kigoma, on 19 September 1916. The Congolese advanced into the heart of Tanganyika, capturing Bihamuro, Mwanza, Karuma, Dodoma, Kiloso and Mahenge, which was captured on 9 October 1917, pushing the Germans back to Mozambique. Ultimately, the Belgians and Congolese took control of 200,000 km² of German territory and returned home after the 11 November 1918 armistice.

And what about the Second World War?

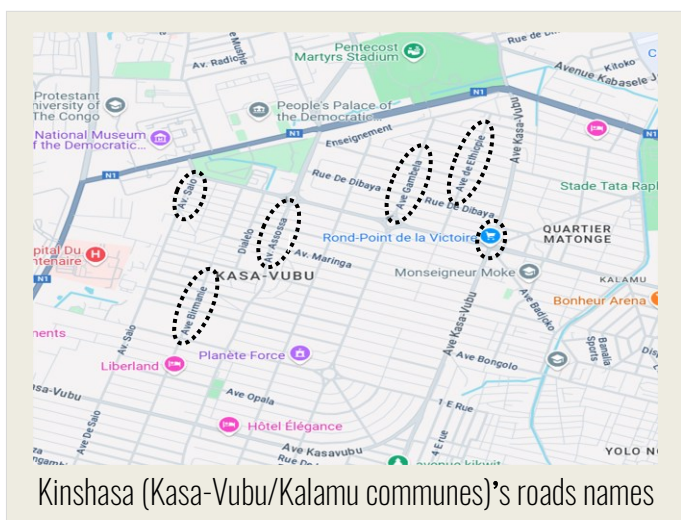
During WWII, the UK used the Nazi invasion of Belgium to involve the Belgian Congo in the war as London welcomed and sheltered the Belgian government in exile, in contrast to Belgian King Leopold III, who remained in Belgium under German occupation, considered later as a betrayal, forcing him to resign after the war. On 28 May 1940, the Governor-General of the Belgian Congo, Pierre Ryckmans, pledged allegiance to the Belgian government in exile in London and declared war on Germany. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill requested logistical and military support from the Congo, which became Britain's most important partner in French-speaking Africa. With its 15,000 soldiers and 25,000 carriers, the 'Force Publique' commanded by Belgian officers achieved memorable victories. On 6 February 1941, they left the Congo via Sudan for Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) the Italians invaded in 1936: the Congolese supported the British in the war against Mussolini's Italy and won the Battle of Assossa on 11 March 1941, occupied Gambela on 23 March and Saio on 3 July, where Italian General Garezza surrendered alongside nine generals and 15,000 men. These victories ended Mussolini's five-year colonisation of Ethiopia and Emperor Haile Selassie's exile from Britain. In the history of Africa, it was the first time that an African country liberated another African country. The following year, the British dispatched two Congo expeditionary corps to West Africa (Nigeria), where they took up positions against Dahomey in October and November 1942. From 18 March to 20 July 1943, they proceeded to Egypt, emerging victorious against the Germans. From July 1943 to July 1944, they travelled to the Middle East and participated in the construction of an airport in Cyrenaica, crossed Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Transjordan, and run military hospitals in East Africa (1942), went to Madagascar (September 1942 and February 1943), and to Burma (May–November 1943) where was settled the renowned 10th Belgian Congo Casualty Clearing Station employed 23 Belgians, including seven doctors, as well as 300 Congolese, including nurses Victor Lundula, Philippe Lomboto and Gaston Diomi, to treat Burmese civilians and British soldiers⁵². After the war, the Congolese returned victorious. Unfortunately, unlike their Belgian comrades, Congolese veterans were not

⁵² Ndaywel (1997: 441). Those WWI and WWII victories coincided with the expansion of Leopoldville: many avenues and roads were named to commemorate them, with the main roundabout at the Kalamu commune named Vic-toire: Mahenge, Assossa, Gambela, Saio, Itaga, Ethiopie, Birmanie, etc.

paid at the end of the war — an injustice that Africans who fought experienced. Moreover, without Congolese gold, Britain might not have emerged victorious from WWII. Prime Minister Churchill forced the Belgian Congo governor to devalue the Congolese franc so that Britain could purchase at low prices the Congolese gold to sell to the US, and to purchase arms in return. Following the use of Congolese uranium in the US's first atomic bomb in September 1944, Belgium, acting on behalf of the Belgian Congo, signed a treaty giving the US full control of all strategic Congolese minerals and the right to exploit them for ten years — an agreement renewed in 1950.

And then came the years of the Cold War...

Despite the establishment of the United Nations in 1945, followed by its agencies and programmes (WHO, World Bank, WTO, UNICEF, UNESCO and UNHCR), the end of WWII ushered in the **Cold War**: a period of mutual suspicion between the two victorious powers, the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) led respectively by Harry Truman and Joseph Stalin. The two superpowers influenced world countries to take sides, dividing them into two blocs: the Eastern Bloc comprised Moscow and communist, socialist or authoritarian countries, where elections were merely a façade and the rulers' leaders appointed by the party, winning with near-hundred-percent majorities, and the Western Bloc comprised the US and capitalist or democratic countries, where free and transparent elections were held. The Cold War lasted from 1947 until the dissolution of the USSR in 1991 and was symbolically materialised by the arms race, especially the nuclear one, which each side used as a weapon of deterrence to gain respect. The political concepts of left/right, socialist/capitalist and totalitarianism/imperialism were also applied to the USSR and the US, respectively, and to their respective allies. While communist Eastern countries adopted Marxist-Leninist ideology, the Western ones, portrayed as imperialists, promoted and applied democratic, multi-party elections. After the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) by the Western Bloc on 4 April 1949, the Eastern Bloc also established its Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO), also known as the Warsaw Pact (WP), on 14 May 1955. It was world geopolitics plunged into trench warfare. Farewell to peace!



How did the Cold War manifest itself?

The Berlin Wall built in 1961 and fell in 1989 symbolised the Cold War: It divided the city into East and West Berlin, while Germany was also divided into the capitalist pro-US West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany, with its capital in Bonn) and communist or socialist pro-USSR East Germany (the German Democratic Republic, with its capital in East Berlin). There was also the barbed-wire border between Western and Eastern countries behind the so-called Iron Curtain: Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and the Soviet Union. It prevented their citizens from crossing into the West. According to propaganda, Western countries were free, while Eastern ones were under autocratic regimes. Even if neither the US nor the USSR ever colonised, when it came to independence, the latter supported independence movements, and the former protected the interests of former Western colonisers — its allies — by keeping those colonies in the shadows of their former metropolises. This Cold War opposition manifested itself in some of the bloodiest wars, including those in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Angola, as well as the conflict that divided Korea into a communist, pro-USSR North and a capitalist, pro-US South. There were also pro-US and pro-USSR guerrilla movements in South America: during those Cold War years, whenever the

US supported one side, the USSR would automatically back the other. The Cold War was also a propaganda war, so the West usually avoids mentioning the greatness of Russia and China, for example. This includes the global impact of Russia on world revolutions and changes, the high price they paid during WWII, the fact that the Red Army defeated Hitler by entering Berlin first, and that the turning point of the war was not only D-Day on 6 June 1944, but also the Nazi defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad (17 July – 2 February 1943). After Hitler attacked the USSR as far as Moscow, the Russians responded until they captured Berlin. This is why Germany signed two Instruments of Surrender: one in Reims, France, with the US, and a second in Berlin, in response to Stalin's anger at the West's ingratitude for ignoring the USSR's contribution to the war effort. Until 1991, the world was divided into two blocs, with some countries, such as the DR Congo and Korea, becoming Cold War frontlines.

How did newly independent countries in Africa behave during the Cold War?

It was a kind of fool's bargain. Malignant African countries, using the idea that it is not possible to have two chiefs in the same village in traditional Africa, even those allied with the US, adopted single-party systems inspired by the USSR's Marxism, Leninism and Communism. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly Zaire, President Marshall Mobutu Sese Seko also had his single-party state, the MPR. In this system, the party was above the state, and every citizen was a *de facto* and *de jure* member from birth. Each African country had its own single-party: the Parti Congolais du Travail (PCT) in Congo-Brazzaville, the Parti Démocratique Gabonais (PDG) in Gabon, the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), the Union pour le Progrès National (UPRONA) in Burundi, etc. Senegal was unusual in having a two-party system: President Léopold Sédar Senghor's Parti Socialiste, led later by Abdou Diouf, who replaced him in 1980; and the Parti Démocratique Sénégalais of Abdoulaye Wade. Some African dictators and Latin American autocrats were revolutionaries who came to power in sometimes bloody coups. Those supported by the USSR also maintained good relationships with the West, and vice versa. Despite being a CIA and Western anti-communist agent, Mobutu also strained relations with China and once severed ties with Israel, only to renew them later; he played a dark and sinister role in the

Angolan War, using his Zaïre as a transit base for US weapons to Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA, the Angolan rebellion. There were also patriotic fronts involved in armed revolutions (e.g. Paul Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front/RPF, Charles Taylor's Liberian National Patriotic Front/NPFL, Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front/RUF in Sierra Leone and Abbassi Madani's Islamic Salvation Front/FIS in Algeria).

Did you say that the Cold War was a war of both propaganda and counter-propaganda?

Yes, it was. The West, particularly the US, established radio stations and television channels to influence opinions and created Hollywood film characters and heroes depicting a single American soldier (Rambo, the Terminator, etc.) capable of defeating an entire enemy army single-handedly. The USSR also had its propaganda tools, especially as it had only one national press newspaper, edited by the government and the party. And, during those Cold War years, one of the most emblematic figures was the spy. Moreover, in Africa, US propaganda portrayed the USSR as a suffering, destitute, poor and evil country, whereas the reality was different. In the Congo during the time of independence, to incite opinion against the Russians and communism, the Catholic Church spread stories about the atheist communist ideology. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) sponsored anti-Russian propaganda via Colonel Mobutu's military camps, explaining that if the Congo became communist, private property would no longer exist: *'If you leave your bicycle, anyone can take it; the same goes for someone else's wife, who would belong to anyone who could take her'*. This incited Congolese hostility towards the Russians and communism⁵³. The USSR pulled out all the

⁵³ DRC opinion believes that Russians starved to death and it's too cold to live there, conveyed by a comic theatre "De Moscovich": a character returned from Moscow with maths books and, disconnected, questioned about two decades of news as if the world had stood still since he left. Militarily, Russia is still strong and has sophisticated weapons, according to the British mercenary Simon Mann in his book *'Cry Havoc. When I set out to overthrow an African tyrant, I knew I would either make billions or end up getting shot.'* When faced with US support for Jonas Savimbi, Mann went to Russia for the sale of their ODAB-500s, seen during the Afghanistan war and which tipped the balance on the battlefield in favour of Dos Santos's MPLA until Savimbi was killed, as did the Russian-made Cuban weapons brought to Angola. Recently, the President of the Central African Republic, Touadéra, begged the French President, Macron, to supply him with weapons as the rebels advanced.

stops, most notably by establishing the Patrice Lumumba University in 1961 following Lumumba's assassination, and by granting scholarships to Africans. Only revolutionaries were aware of the Russians' military strength, and many independence movements or guerrillas received Russian support and training. However, to do justice to history, the United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Resolution 1514) was proposed by the Russian Nikita Khrushchev in his speech to the General Assembly on 23 September. And, after Lumumba's assassination, the USSR and Khrushchev led the criticism of the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's irresponsibility, which led to Lumumba's assassination. It is said that Khrushchev banged his shoe on his desk at the United Nations on 12 October 1960 in protest at the remarks of the Philippine delegate. The USSR and the other communist and Eastern European countries responded with negative propaganda against the USA and the West, labelling all the revolutionaries as 'imperialists', meaning those regimes which only care about their profits and interests. The West was no paradise on earth, but people lived more freely than in the East, where the regimes' political police were unrelenting. The West did not monitor, imprison or torture its citizens, while the East did. Admittedly, Eastern European countries also had certain positive aspects, such as compulsory schooling, free education and women's rights. The USSR was also home to many great scientists. In terms of state and officials' lies and people's freedom of opinion, Eastern countries only had state media with a single narrative: whatever the state professed, ordinary people had to accept and repeat, being endlessly brainwashed and intellectually bludgeoned.

Colonialism is under scrutiny.

Why do former British colonies seem more successful at democracy and good governance than their French counterparts, while Portugal is in disarray?

Macron told him that the Russians had refused and connected him to Moscow. Surprisingly, Touadéra learned they were against giving him ineffective weapons seized from the rebels and forbidden by the UN. Instead, they offered him modern weapons and logistical support from trainers. The government is now defeating the rebels.

All colonisations were the same: they exploited the colonisers and left Africans scarred. Like the slave trade, colonisation was a wicked, violent, destructive and devastating enterprise, as well as a regime of terror. The UK, an island with colonies around the world, implemented indirect rule in its colonies to solve the problem of a lack of skilled colonial labour and relied on and strengthened existing local and traditional structures, making them its agents on the ground and training them to do so. Thus, at independence, these British colonies, with their well-educated African leaders and even university graduates, tried to manage their countries better and establish structures acceptable to modern states. In contrast, other colonial powers used direct rule to stifle Africans, while the Belgians stated for the Congo that, *'No intellectuals, fewer problems,'* with only a handful of trained academics by the time of independence.

Are these examples specific to the inhumanities committed by Europeans in Africa?

The colonialists sometimes made mistakes that are difficult to explain today, even when considered in context. Africans who had lost loved ones remembered these atrocities and passed the memory down through the generations, remembering them as well as Julius Caesar's *'De Bello Gallico'* or the French Asterix comic strips. Examples include the French assassination of leaders such as Um Nyobé in Cameroon, whose body was buried in concrete; Félix-Roland Moumié on 3 November 1960 in Geneva; and the Madagascan fighters whom the French threw out of aeroplanes while still alive. Then the Belgian Delcomune, who recounts how he stole, even killing their owners in the process, Congolese traditional religious objects offered to Leopold II for his Tervuren Museum.

What about other genocides in Kenya, Namibia, Algeria, etc?

Every colonial history has its secret, macabre episodes that those in power, especially the heirs of the colonists, do not like to revisit. This is why there is an omerta to prevent the sons and daughters of former colonised Africans from remembering these episodes (and perhaps taking revenge or demanding reparations): the idiotic and barbaric acts of Leopold II's agents in the Congo, the Germans' genocide of 70,000 Herero and Namaqua in Namibia between 1904 and 1907, the plundering of Kenya's lands by British settlers, who drove out the indigenous people and imprisoned them unjustly, between 70,000 and 150,000 members of the Mau-Mau resistance movement were arrested and detained without trial in inhumane conditions, with

the British using unprecedented violence and it is estimated that 100,000 Kenyans were killed, tortured or mutilated, and also one of the darkest pages of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) been the forced displacement of two million Algerians and their confinement in '*camps de regroupement*' modelled on Nazi concentration camps. They aimed to deprive the independentist Algerian movement, the National Liberation Front (FLN), of recruiting members in the villages. It was with indignation that the 29-year-old Michel Rocard, who would later become Prime Minister of Mitterrand, wrote the 1957 report '*Le Drame algérien*' (The Algerian Drama) when he had been informed of these movements of Algerians by pure chance. After three months of observation and investigation, he discovered that the 'regroupement' camps, which had begun in 1955, populated with women and children, became places where people were dying from hunger and poor living conditions. Almost two million Algerians were in these camps by the end of the war in 1962.

What were their consequences?

These colonial atrocities gave rise to resistance movements that often turned into independence parties, such as the Mau Mau in Kenya, FRELIMO in Mozambique and SWAPO in Namibia. The leaders of these movements, even after the independence for those who fought against the dictatorships, often ended up in prison, and then became later presidents: Kwame Nkrumah, Nelson Mandela, Laurent Gbagbo, Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, who was imprisoned and tortured, Kenneth Kaunda of North Rhodesia (now Zambia), who refused to drink tea as a non-violent protest against it being forbidden to him in prison, etc.

What happened to the Senegalese riflemen in Thiaroye?

It's one of those inhuman colonial injustices. During the Second World War, the French mobilised black soldiers from Francophone African colonies. They were known as the '*Tirailleurs sénégalais*' (Senegalese Riflemen) and they liberated France. However, when Colonel Leclerc and his men liberated Paris on 19 August 1944 and General de Gaulle entered the city on 25 August to read out the German surrender, all the black soldiers on the front line were sent to the rear. This process is known as the '*whitening of the army*.' As the war ended, those black African soldiers were sent home without their war pay. While cantonised in Thiaroye, near Dakar in Senegal, preparing to return home, they revolted to claim their due

pay and basic rights. On 1 December 1944, the French army entered the camp and massacred 300 of them.

Decolonisation: Upheavals, decoys and glimmers of light

How can decolonisation be analysed?

Decolonisation itself was also a false promise. Contemporary Europe has always experienced discomfort and guilt due to the colonial challenges, conflicts, allure, and fleeting glimpses of hope it faced. While history has witnessed acts of revenge, we must recognise these facts without unintentionally heightening tensions or provoking fears of retaliation. We must recount the story of Leopold II's genocide in the Congo. We must document and record the ongoing Congo proxy war. When it came to management, there were three types of colonialism: the British used the '*indirect rule*' policy because, as an island nation that had colonised the world, they could not have a British workforce everywhere, therefore, they relied on the empowerment of local and traditional structures and trained local people to manage these colonised entities; in contrast, the French, Belgians, Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish used '*direct rule*', implementing direct metropolitan administration in every colonised area and establishing European laws; and the Portuguese used the '*settlement colonisation*' as they moved to these colonies *en masse*, married indigenous people and had children with them, what made Portuguese decolonisation the most difficult, resulting in catastrophic independence wars everywhere, which is a setback that they must now make up for. With decolonisation, former British colonies led the way in achieving independence for sub-Saharan Africa, such as Kwame Nkrumah's Ghana in 1957, and seemed better able to run their own countries than former French colonies, creating the impression that they were still colonised. While the Commonwealth seems to be a trade organisation and much more, promoting equality, the Francophonie is unclear and confusing, apart from the beauty of the French language.

Does this mean that the British performed better in their colonies?

Of course, none of the colonisers could be exonerated, and there was no such thing as a proper or best decolonisation. As the African proverb says, '*Whether you're a cricket or a cockroach, you're bound to suffer the fate of all insects*'. Europe never wanted to lose its hold on Africa. Following the independence of Indochina and

Algeria, and amid an economic and financial crisis, France established privileged pseudo-colonial relationships with other former colonies and newly independent countries to its advantage, including securing access to oil and raw materials. France also established military bases throughout francophone Africa to launch and support coups, perpetrate electoral frauds, support leaders who aligned with its interests while removing the anti-France, and manage the CFA franc used by francophone African countries, which poses a challenge to France–Africa relations. However, Africans must take responsibility for the lack of leaders who commit to their countries, avoid corruption, and steal billions to deposit in Western and Middle Eastern banks. Ironically, once these leaders lose power, the ill-got gains are lost forever, and they do not learn any lessons from this. The vicious circle continues. Rare are African leaders such as Nelson Mandela of South Africa who, even though he suffered and was imprisoned by apartheid, instead of seeking revenge by driving out all white people, he chose to forgive to preserve the unity of his country and create a multiracial South Africa; and countries such as Botswana and Cape Verde as they never experienced a political crisis since gaining independence, and have achieved post-independence economic miracles. Revolutionary leaders such as Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso and Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, who died without a foreign bank account, are exceptions that prove the rule: Africa is hostage to its bad leaders, such as Mobutu who died the way he died, Idi Amin of Uganda who had a chest full of medals and claimed to have conquered the British Empire and to be the last King of Scotland, proclaimed himself Field Marshal, adorning his chest with decorations and finally had himself transported by white people on a ‘typoi’ (a chair placed on two long pieces of wood, connected by crossbars, and carried by several bearers. It is reserved for chiefs), and Jean-Bedel Bokassa went too far when he crowned himself emperor of his country, which became the Central African Empire — a true farce, a crowning expensive ceremony while his countrymen were still living in poverty. He was later overthrown in a coup d’état. In Equatorial Guinea, Macias Nguema was a bloodthirsty dictator. In Chad, Hissène Habré was ousted from power due to his human rights abuses and mass murder.

What role did colonialists play in Congo’s mismanagement and Africa’s poor governance following independence?

The decolonisation happened with its mountains of problems, particularly given that colonists often employed the ‘*divide and rule*’ strategy to divide certain entities to create new small states they could easily control. For instance, Hindu India was separated from Muslim Pakistan, leaving Kashmir as a problematic buffer zone. Then, Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan. Throughout colonisation, the colonists also focused and favoured a particular group, often instrumentalising them by convincing them to be the elite to lead other tribes. As independence approached, they would change, get close to those they had marginalised, and sometimes grant them the keys. This led to clashes such as the conflict between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, which culminated in genocide, the fastest and deadliest of the 20th century. As the colonies provided raw materials for the industries of the colonialists, the latter never transferred technology, leaving these independent countries dependent on their former metropolises. However, sixty years later, these explanations are one-dimensional.

Given the endemic Congolese politicians’ mediocrity and leaders’ lack of ethics, what can they learn from priests and pastors’ curricula?

Ideally, the administration of the decolonised state, the government of independent countries and public services would have learned from the churches. While knowledge, education and training do not necessarily equate to ethics, running a state indeed requires certain natural gifts of goodness and community service, as well as guidance and training in modern good governance and state management. Let’s take an example. In 1903, the French opened a training school in St-Louis, Senegal, which moved in 1913 to the island of Gorée, to the former military garrison of Sébikotane, near Dakar, in 1938, and finally in 1984 to Kolda after being named in 1915: ‘*l’Ecole de Formation des Instituteurs William Ponty*’ (The William Ponty Teacher Training School). It has trained presidents of African independence, including Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d’Ivoire), Modibo Keita (Mali), Hamani Diori (Niger), Hubert Maga (Benin) and Maurice Yaméogo (Burkina Faso), as well as other African leaders and writers.

What happened in the DRC? Did the Belgians train some to manage their countries in the future?

Congolese did not benefit from such an experience as the Belgians implemented the “direct rule” colonial approach, opposite to the

British “indirect rule” where British minimised the colonisation cost by training local people to become their civil servants managing, on their behalf, the colony, Belgians did not train Congolese and, when they decided to offer Congolese opportunities to travel abroad, in Belgium specifically for university studies, those Congolese were prohibited in studying politics and law. On 30 June 1960, the independence day, Congo had around ten academics. Only the Catholic and Protestant Churches acted differently. From their earliest days in Africa and the Congo, the churches baptised Christians and also trained Congolese people to take their place, considering themselves to be missionaries. Priests and pastors have honoured their Catholic and Protestant churches by managing them effectively over the centuries, even after their elder missionaries returned to Europe. Their success stems from many years of rigorous theoretical and practical training, studying secular and religious sciences and philosophy, followed by years of theological studies interspersed with practical training and living with senior priests in parishes, where the focus is on ethics and community life, fostering a strong sense of service. They learnt to mortify themselves, serve others, care for the weakest and help those in need; they were trained to cultivate the virtues of obedience, learn to share, develop charity, live with others, manage the Church, connect with the elders, and undergo ongoing refresher training. To a certain extent, even African lawyers and surgeons’ curricula seemed to have copied the priesthood training and teaching approach: a rigorous selection, intensive theoretical teaching, several years of internships in the field to live and to learn from ancient priests or surgeons, commitment to updated training programmes, and continuous training and support throughout life. A priest, pastor, doctor or lawyer can leave Africa or the Congo for any country and adapt immediately, except perhaps for normal language difficulties. Politicians could have been successful if they had adopted the same methodology as the Church. Alongside these unprepared political leaders of decolonisation, the Church should be congratulated for training its indigenous clergy and quickly founding minor and major seminaries, as well as novitiates for sisters and brothers. If politicians had adopted the same methodology, they could have achieved success.

Catholic and Protestant were visionaries?

Without any doubt, they need to be praised. The first Congolese priest, Abbé Stéphane Kaoze, was ordained in Baudouinville (now

Moba) in Katanga in 1917, and the first bishop of the Second Evangelisation, Pierre Kimbongo, was consecrated in Kisantu in 1956. The Protestants also trained local pastors to manage their Church. Those trained for the priesthood were the only elites, whether they became priests or not and played an important role in the first independence years: the first President Kasa-Vubu was a former minor and major seminary student, as he wanted to become a catholic priest; as a professor at the minor seminary of Lemfu, Jesuit Father Van Wing inspired and assisted Edmond Nzeza-Nlandu to create his *ABAKO* (Association des Bakongo) to become a political party; Antoine Gizenga and Pierre Mulele were former minor seminarists of Kinzambi, Abbe Joseph Malula helped and supported the founding of Lumumba's *Mouvement National Congolais (MNC)*; Abbe Jean Loya from Kisantu became the ABAKO chaplain, etc. The role of Catholic and Protestant missionaries, as well as Kimbanguists and Muslims, in running schools, training young and establishing hospitals and other community initiatives, is undeniable — especially when the state is neglecting its duties! Without the missionaries, many of whom sacrificed their lives for the Congolese people, their situation would have been worse. Missionaries were the only ones willing to sacrifice their lives and live in remote inland areas in harsh conditions. There are moving accounts of missionaries and European administrators who distinguished themselves through their love for the Congolese people they wished to help. One colonial doctor recounted how, upon arriving, he had to work non-stop day and night, quickly train local assistants and use his expertise to make disinfectant alcohol, perform amputations, carry out operations even at night with an oil lamp, treat onchocerciasis patients and advise pregnant women on reducing the number of childbirth-related deaths. He was able to treat tropical diseases such as sleeping sickness and smallpox, as well as infections such as tetanus and intestinal worms, which traditional African healers and diviners were unable to cure. They built permanent structures, such as Gothic churches, schools and buildings to modern standards, bringing a glimmer of modernity to these lost corners of the world.

Are they memorable names, stories or characters?

For example, James Telford, who died in 1878 at Pala-Bala (six others followed: Charles Petersen, Hugh McKergow, Mary Richards, Adam McAll, George Lanceley, Jesse Blunt, William Appel, Stephen White & Henry Craven), three months after his arrival,

wrote this testimony: *“I will offer my body as a stone to build a road into Africa. I will offer my blood as mortar to bind the stones together so that others can travel along it”*. Born a slave in the US, Louise Fleming, also known as Lulu, was a remarkable Protestant missionary whose memory still lives on to this day in Pala-Bala where she arrived and settled in 1887, aged 25, having learned from her parents that their ancestors came from the Congo area. She returned to the USA in 1891, studied medicine, and became a surgeon. She returned to the Congo Free State in 1895 and became the first and only female surgeon in Congo, winning the hearts of the Congolese. She returned to the USA again due to illness and died in Philadelphia in 1899. A small stela at the entrance to Pala-Bala commemorates her. The contributions of a Scheutist Father Raphael Kethule to the development of schools, extracurricular activities and sports, including the construction of the Tata Raphaël Stadium and scholarships for Congolese students in Belgium, deserve recognition, as does another Belgian Scheutist, Jef de Laet (1931–2009), who, when assigned to St Pius X in Ngiri-Ngiri, where Abbé Jean Loya was parish priest, developed an incredible reinsertion of young gangs known in Kinshasa at the time as the ‘Bills’. He even learned their slang, *‘indubil’*, and was nicknamed ‘Father Buffalo’, bought a property and founded his ‘Cabaret Liyoto’, a cultural centre where unemployed young, marijuana smokers, and bandits can learn theatre, stage activities, and music and his Minzoto Wela-Wela band and music studio: he trained many musicians and comedians: Bozy Boziana, Madilu, Carlito, and so on. Other priests, each with his skills, such as Jesuit Xavier Zabalo, who worked in Ndjili, are still positively remembered.

Can the lack of trained leaders explain the Congo’s ups and downs?

Admittedly, there was a very great qualitative leap⁵⁴, as Thomas Kanza, Patrice Lumumba’s government minister and one of the

⁵⁴ The improvisation syndrome: for the UN membership request, the two Congo Brazza and Leo needed different names. Since leaders were celebrating, the Congo-Leo Delegated Minister to the UN, Thomas Kanza, was charged with Stéphane Tchichelle, the Foreign Affairs minister of the Brazza, who crossed the river, and decided, without any parliamentary vote, that Congo Leo would be named *‘la République du Congo’* and Brazza *‘la République Congolaise’*. Central Bank management, civil servants’ salaries, Thomas Kanza himself who needed to leave for New York as the Ambassador in the UN, were

rare scholars who was also already an international civil servant in Belgium, observed it about, for example, their first Lumumba government Council of Ministers: it was a cacophony as nobody knew what it meant to be a minister. They even spent hours debating, without finding an answer, whether the ministers would call each other as comrade, mister or honourable, as non-ministers designated them as *'His Excellencies'*? None of them even knew the formula to use when writing a letter to the UN Secretary-General. When Lumumba himself planned the official visit to the UN in New York in July-August 1960, the Leopoldville US Embassy was surprised when Lumumba's protocol officer requested visas, and he did not know that visas had to be stamped on a passport.

What is the common denominator of colonialism?

Colonialism was inhuman, and the colonised were considered to be subhuman, almost nothing. Regardless of indiscipline or rebellion, Congolese and Africans were mercilessly killed, and villages were burnt and erased from maps, causing thousands of deaths⁵⁵. Hence, the first Guinea president, Sékou Touré's brutal and unambiguous words to General De Gaulle in Conakry in 1958, a speech that led to Guinea's independence: "*We prefer freedom in poverty to opulence in slavery*"⁵⁶. At a certain point, it became untenable. During the colonial period, Congolese towns and cities were divided into neighbourhoods or communes for black people and others for indigenous black people, who were strictly forbidden to stay in the white area after 6 pm, except for workers. To enjoy the same rights as white people, Congolese people had to pass a civics test. This involved dressing, talking and walking like white people, having good manners, adopting Western and European culture and passing a white

equations with unknowns: he had to find his way without any guideline neither from the Prime Minister nor the Foreign Office Minister Bomboko spending times in hotels with women he seemed collecting than at his office.

⁵⁵ Such as the Congolese mixed-race children their Belgian white fathers did not recognised, taken away from their mothers and placed in nuns' boarding schools, where the treatment was less Catholic.

⁵⁶ I once asked Justin Bomboko, who was Lumumba's foreign minister in 1960, why their generation had requested independence so early on, despite the DRC being short of civil servants. He replied that he understood we had not experienced colonial insults, 'monkey' and 'imbecile', forced labour, or snubs. Colonisation, he said, was inhuman, nasty and brutal, and denied black people the right to be human by treating them as slaves and subhuman.

civil servant visit exam to their home to check that their children had also adopted the same good manners. Such a person became an 'évolué' (evolved individual), receiving a registration card and becoming an 'immatriculé' (a registered person) and being permitted to shop in white' shops, drink wine, send their children to schools for white children and go to the cinema, among other privileges. Due to those humiliations, Congolese had no other choice but to fight for their independence to become equal to whites; injustice and Apartheid, which even justified Lumumba's speech of 30 June 1960.

What about the Bad Samaritans?⁵⁷

According to Ha-Joon Chang, there are international and well-informed bilateral organisations that could do better in advising or assisting Africa in its fight against poverty. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund programs, for example, harmed Africa's economy and never developed it. Conversely, they enforced harsh, anti-social policies, like the infamous 1980s "Structural Adjustment Plan". This presents a challenge for contemporary Africans. African leaders' mismanagement and corruption also must be pointed out. Why did the US design and deliver the industrialisation Marshall and Dodge Plans to save Europe and Japan after WWII, but no one has designed or even thought of a similar plan for Africa? Why couldn't Africans, themselves, design either a global African or each country's antipoverty plan and become their own Godfather?

How to solve such an equation?

The main responsibility lies with the Africans and the Congolese, who are far from showing that they are up to the task. In the case of the Congo, the worrying fact is that every time there is a regime change, it seems to be a gentleman who arrives at the head of the state with nothing more than speeches, without a manifesto and a business plan previously calculated, debated, evaluated, criticised, and measured. It's incredible how few Africans evaluate their actions after they've been in power: like Mobutu after 32 years in power, they all die without leaving any memoirs. It seems that certain African countries, and the DRC in particular, suffer from the improvisation syndrome when it comes to appointing heads of state and ministers. Since 1960... We often arrive by chance. Given the

⁵⁷ Chang, H.-J., *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*, Bloomsbury Press, 2007.

failures, why not adopt the British political culture of the opposition party to have a shadow cabinet of ministers, so that, once in power, you don't improvise? Another model could be Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and his 50 successful years at the helm of his country, the United Arab Emirates, as his *cursus honorum* speaks for itself⁵⁸, especially how his father and grandfather prepared him to lead by sending him studying in Britain, how he did his military service there and they made him visit all the Arab monarchies to learn from their mismanagement and subsequent failure, and how he built the Emirates airline and meditates his parents' concern: to make sure that when the oil runs out, they don't return to the desert with camels. Ethiopian Airlines, the driving force behind the country's development, is another template.

But what about the DRC, which was not a British colony?

The Congo equation is filled with numerous unknowns. For him to own the Congo, during the 1885 Berlin Conference, Leopold II maliciously shared the Congo cake amongst the world's great powers: Congo was launched as an international capital market. This made the colonisation of the Congo unique, as it was also the only Belgian colony. The former German colonies of Rwanda and Burundi were incorporated into the Congo, forming Congo-Ruanda-Urundi after Germany's defeat in the First World War. It also lost its colonies of Togoland, which became Togo when it gained independence and was given to France; Kamerun was given to the British and, upon gaining independence, was annexed to French Cameroon; Tanganyika became British before uniting with Zanzibar upon independence to form Tanzania, while Namibia became a South African colony. All of these annexations created problems, some of which still exist today, such as the conflict between the French-speaking east and the Anglophone west of Cameroon. Belgium's colonisation of the Congo was unique. As Belgium was a small country, it recruited European and even African foreigners to work there. In keeping with the spirit of the Berlin Conference, it also sought foreign capital and investment. Of course, Belgium received the lion's share of the profits while the Congolese received the crumbs. Belgium could have done better and left behind a different Congo to the one it left in 1960, with a culture of corruption among politicians that will require

⁵⁸ Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, *My Story: 50 Memories from 50 Years of Service*, Explorer Publishing & Distribution, 2019.

a real revolution to eradicate. Congo would be better managed if the Belgians had introduced the Protestant Scandinavian management style, in which a leader or responsible person acts as a servant to others. Belgium revealed its malicious intent by supporting Tshombe's Katanga secession on 11 July 1960, having planned it during the Brussels Round Table. The Belgian government created a special office with officials in Katanga. The Belgians were mainly responsible for the assassination of Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito on 17 January 1960 in Elisabethville, or played a terrible role in this, as they forced the Katangese to accept the prisoner Lumumba, knowing he could be dead.

Some research centres and famous missionaries

Aequatoria Bamanya Centre. Located 10 kilometres from Mbandaka in the former province of Equateur, the **Centre Bamanya** was founded in 1937 by the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Fathers Edmond Boelaert (1899–1966) and Gustaaf Edward Hulstaert (1900–1990), who started the *Africanist* review *Aequatoria* that same year. The Centre Bamanya was established in 1979–1980 and has since published numerous monographs, particularly focusing on the languages and culture of the Mongo people, and edited the *Annales Aequatoria revue*. The Centre also has a library of over 8,000 books and an extensive research collection.

The CEEBA. After a PhD in anthropology at the Sorbonne, Reverend Father Herman Hohegger, a member of the Divine Word Society (SVD), founded the CEEBA (Centre d'Etudes Ethnologiques de Bandundu/Centre for Ethnological Studies of Bandundu) in 1965, a branch of the Anthropos Institute (of the Divine Word Missionaries) in Germany and has published thousands of monographs to date. It also holds numerous archives on African culture.

CEPAS. An offshoot of the Bibliothèque de l'Etoile in Leveville (Lusanga), founded by Jesuit Fathers, the Centre d'Etudes et Actions Sociales (CEPAS) was once directed by the Belgian Jesuit priest, sociologist, historian and author, Father Léon de Saint Moulin (1932–2019). He was a veritable living library of the history of the DRC, publishing maps and, above all, the latest linguistic and ethnographic studies of the DRC.

Father Frans Bontinck (1920–2005). *A missionary of Scheut, he was a historian of Congo and Africa and a professor at the University of Lovanium in Kinshasa. He was the editor of important written sources on Africa and the author of numerous articles on the history of the Congo. He was also the founder, collector and director of an impressive African library based at the Père Nkongolo Scholasticate, near the University of Kinshasa.*

Is the decolonisation of Africa an ongoing process or unfinished business, distinct from that of Asia and Latin America?

The impression was that Africa remained the last colonial stronghold in which Europe sought to entrench itself. Following the independence of the US, Canada, Asia, and Latin America — where revolutionaries and freedom fighters severed their countries' economic and financial ties with the former European colonial powers — their leaders clearly grasped and committed to a new vision and direction for their nations. In contrast, to subjugate Africa and the Congo, Europe and Belgium backed corrupt leaders who would support them and never oppose them. In an interview, the former President of Ghana, Jerry Rawlings, highlights this issue: “*You have to do this or that, or else... What blackmail!*”, speaking about the IMF and WB's injunctions to African leaders. The late President Idriss Deby of Chad voiced similar frustrations. Although he had promised to serve only two terms, he was pressured by a constitutionalist sent from Paris who urged him to remain in power and amend the constitution. He didn't even know the man, he stated! The African tailspin is linked to such global pseudo-decolonisation, where countries that appear independent are governed by puppet replicating colonialist rules, while the *international community*, like Pontius Pilate, wash its hands of the ongoing African mess.



29 July 1959: Lovanium rector, Bishop Gillon, presented the first university diploma, Agronomist Engineer, to Pierre Lebughe, they both toured Europe, Africa, and the Congo to show such pride.

Does the colonialism persist in the mentality and non-decolonised political culture of Africans and Congolese pose a threat?

Interesting. Colonialism is not only physical, financial and economic, but also cultural, psychopathological, moral and intellectual. Frantz Fanon emphasised the struggle against mental colonialism. A psychiatrist from Martinique, he campaigned for the crucial mental emancipation and autonomy of former colonised peoples. He had such a profound impact on Algerian independence that he adopted Algerian nationality, and upon his death, the Algerian government returned his body to Algeria for burial. His two main books, *'Black Skin, White Masks'* (1952) and *'The Wretched of the Earth'* (1961), are calls to begin an ongoing struggle for independence: the psychological decolonisation that the reggae artist Bob Marley called for to *'emancipate yourself from mental slavery.'* Colonialism denied the existence of the colonised, who didn't exist at all. In the Congo, colonialists' insults, sniping and bullying drove the Congolese, including Lumumba, to tell themselves: whatever happens, we will take our independence and be human first. The dignity and pride of being oneself are invaluable. Colonisation was a denial of Black culture, race, and African values. After centuries of colonisation, Europe also needs to decolonise itself ideologically

and mentally from ‘neo’ and ‘post’ colonialism, or from Achille Mbembe’s ‘post-colony’: a mindset full of clichés⁵⁹.

What challenges do black people and Congolese people face in such an uncertain and dirty world? A world that leads to a lake full of hungry crocodiles, where it is impossible to swim.

Fortunately, Africans and black people did not enter the new global world inaugurated by colonisation empty-handed. They brought their African identity, respect for nature, solidarity, respect for elders, humanity, equality, freedom, negritude, the ‘ubuntu’ philosophy and, more important the Black and African philosophy Father Placide Tempels, a Belgian Franciscan catholic missionary in Katanga, in DRC, inaugurated with his masterpiece book in 1945, *La philosophie bantoue*, which was translated into English in 1959: *The Bantu Philosophy*. In his search for the most effective method of evangelising the Congolese and Africans and contrary to the Western view that black people were not intelligent and do not have philosophy, he recognise an African Bantu—the largest ethnic group in Africa, stretching from east to west and as far south as South Africa — philosophy, and wrote that it is based on the concept of ‘vital force’, and concluded that, among the Bantu, ‘*being equals force*’. Unlike Western thought, the Bantu believe that being is dynamic rather than static, and that beings and objects are expressions of this vital force, which grows or diminishes. Hence, his hierarchical classification of these beings about their possession of force. Temple is effectively the father of African philosophy, and native Africans who later became philosophers used and surpassed his book and theories. As many have pointed out, being does not equate to force, as force is merely an attribute of being, as in black Africa, *being is with force*. The Congolese Catholic Father Professor Tshiamalenga Ntumba, a contemporary African philosopher, stated, for example, that *if we consider the maxims of Marcus Aurelius, the quotations from the Pre-Socratics and the wise sayings of La Rochefoucauld to be philosophical,*

⁵⁹ The recent France and its former African colonies crises are the result of France’s failure to decolonise. This is a disappointment for Africans who believed in President Emmanuel Macron’s youth and potential, but who, through his speeches and behaviour, demonstrate that he is a product of neo-colonialism. Relations with Algeria are likely to deteriorate further. All this has nothing to do with so-called anti-French sentiment: Africans still speak and love French and the French people, but do not supporting with what the regime in Bamako description as the ‘junta in power in Paris’ policies.

then African proverbs must also be considered the same. Africans also brought their '*emotions are Negro while reason is Hellenic*', as the Senegalese independent President and poet Léopold Sédar Senghor stated it, the now globalisation we experience, as a '*rendez-vous of giving and receiving*'.

What happened after African countries' independence?

Colonialism is not a one-way street: the Romans colonised the Greeks, but the latter made the Romans love and adopt Greek culture and language; reggae has conquered the world, Congolese rumba has become a UNESCO intangible heritage of humanity, and Aimé Césaire speaks of the 'rebel' negro literature of colonised and post-colonised black Africans who learned, adopted and adapted the foreign languages of the colonisers, mixing them with their owns and later succeeding in making the colonisers adopt their words and neologism such as '*the negritude*'. Historical black and African figures such as Nelson Mandela have become international icons, and South Africa's post-apartheid conflict resolution has become a model copied even by Northern Ireland's Good Friday agreement. Even the debate on homosexuality versus polygamy is reaching a cultural crossroads, with neither side trying to dismiss the other, an evidence of the third cultural globalisation's paradigm of '*hybridisation*'⁶⁰, which Professor Ndolamb Ngokwey advocates and which others refer to as the cultural creolisation, indigenisation or crossbreeding: the mixing of Asian, African, American and European cultures, involving the borrowing and local adaptation of different cultural elements. In fact, unlike the colonists, the missionaries set up schools and training centres to educate Congolese men. They founded post-secondary institutions, including major seminaries, novitiates and, most notably, Lovanium University. They also studied African cultures and civilisations, and established even research centres and renowned libraries. For example, as the population already suffered from the slave trade, the traditional chiefs refused to collaborate with the white colonists. Even when those colonists used interpreters, these conveyed to their interlocutors what the latter wished to hear rather than the truth. These colonists, steeped in a sense of superiority, never challenged this. Most importantly, they appointed their new chiefs — usurpers of the colonial powers — whom they called '*kapita*', thereby creating disorder

⁶⁰ Ngokwey, *Op. Cit.*, p. 17.

in the traditional power structure. When the missionaries arrived and learned local cultures and languages, they corrected this state of affairs. They also studied and systematised African languages and translated the Bible and catechisms into languages such as Kikongo, Lingala, Tshiluba, Swahili, Kisakata, Lomongo, Lontomba, Lokonda and Kitetela, creating new lexicons and setting up training centres and publishing books in these languages⁶¹

What is the real issue here?

It is mentally and ideologically difficult for former colonialists and their descendants to accept that Africa deserved independence and freedom to decide its future. Most Westerners suggest that Africans quickly turn those dark colonial days and stories pages without even reading them, and only to continue to swallow their conflicts (the now Ukraine-Russia one), philosophies and geopolitical analysis, and to move on. Pope Francis's advising 'blessing' or accepting same-sex marriage versus the African Catholic position clash is an example of this narrative and cultural divide.

And, what about the so-called Francafrrique?

Francafrrique is a neologism invented in 1945 by the French journalist Jean Piot. This is the aftermath of the Second World War and the African independence movement of the 1960s. As he recognised how badly off France was, General Charles de Gaulle set up an African policy led by his right-hand man, Jacques Foccart, who was in charge of the French president's relationships with African countries. Foccart established a network with all the presidents of French-speaking African countries, who were required to sign agreements giving France preferential access to their raw materials at prices fixed by France. Even worse, some African councils of ministers were dictated to by Paris. France set up armed bases in Africa and organised even coups d'état and changes of government, while elections were democratic in name only. *Francafrrique* is neo/post-colonialism. Although presidents Nicolas Sarkozy, François Hollande

⁶¹ In Mai-Ndombe, Father Jules Denis published '*Lesele le monyaw. Ndaw ile o Ebangeli o mna mob oi mo Basakata*' (Good news. Stories from Gospels in Sakata language), '*Katekisi ole babai, Basaa ya Badja*' (catechism for the Babai, Basaa and Badja people), and especially the booklet '*Baba ne Menangie*', which teaches people how to read and write in Kisakata, making Bokoro the Mai-Ndombe's Latin Quarter with its Minor Seminary and many schools. Father Jules Van Houtte published '*Nsang'oloti*' in Ibeke, etc.

and Emmanuel Macron⁶² claimed to have abolished it, their actions suggest otherwise.

What are the West and France doing specifically?

France has yet to grasp that a new Africa exists, and the rest of the Global South is astonished by the West's double standards. Europe and the West do not want Africans and Asians to question why George Bush and Tony Blair were not sent to The Hague, why Laurent Gbagbo was arrested on false pretences, and why Sarkozy threatened to bomb the planes of African Union presidents if they attempted to fly to Libya to initiate peace talks with Muammar Gaddafi, and why this one also was assassinated the way he was. It is cynical that NATO, which we were led to believe was an alliance for Europe, was involved in the barbaric murder of Gaddafi in the twenty-first century! The Sahel presidents warned Sarkozy, Cameron and Obama that this would be disastrous for their countries, as Libya's arsenal would end up in the hands of jihadists there. And that has indeed happened. When rebels attacked the Ivorian President Gbagbo's regime, France did not activate the defence agreements. However, they did activate them to remove him. As we now know, President Gbagbo was driven out of his bunker by the French army after intense bombardment, and many innocents were shot dead. The speech by President Sarkozy in Dakar denying that Africans have a history, and the shameful incident in Ouagadougou between Presidents Macron and Kaboré of Burkina Faso, were more than worrying: when the host leaves, the guest must leave too. Africans can no longer accept the double standards applied to the coups in the Sahel compared to those in Chad and Gabon. This could be irreversible regardless of Western attitudes.

And what about the CFA franc?

It is another French neocolonial tool. France manages the currency of Francophone Africans, and some pro-France economists state that leaving the CFA zone would be disastrous for Africans.

⁶² On 4 December 2019, I was in the conference room at the end of the 29th NATO summit in Watford, England, when French president Emmanuel Macron declaring that, upon his returning to Paris, he would summon the five African presidents of the Sahel countries (Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali and Chad) and order them to make a chose. I could feel my blood rushing to my head, and I could barely see straight. Our generation of African independence children is embarking on what Cheikh Hamidou Kane described in his novel, an '*ambiguous adventure*,' in our relations with our Western partners.

However, Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia abandoned it in favour of their national currencies, and they work! While this may be financially defensible, especially in the context of regional integration, the rhetoric is stagnant politically. Created during the independence, printed and held in France, which fully controlled the CFA, the franc is fully controlled by France. This was evident on 11th January 1994, when France unilaterally decided to devalue it by 50%, with disastrous consequences for Africa⁶³.

But how did the Belgians seem to succeed in the Congo?

Belgian colonisation of the Congo was a well-constituted and well-ordered body managed by the '*colonial trinity*': *the state*, with its rigid administration symbolised by colonial helmets for protection from the sun, *the Catholic Church* and its priests with beards and always wearing cassocks, and nuns wearing headscarves, receiving state subsidies and worked for it while knowing how to distance itself when the morals and teachings of the Church required it, and finally the (international) *capital*, in the form of large companies exploiting and enriching themselves in the Congo. The Belgians brought their Walloon and Flemish conflict to the Congo; the former were in charge of the administration and imposed the French language, the latter, famously hard workers, worked in inland factories and were nicknamed '*mindele-mboka*' (meaning 'countryside whites' in Lingala). The Congolese remember the Walloons as pleasure-seekers who wore nice clothes and shoes, and the 'Flamands' (Flemish) as hard workers. Congolese believed that Flemish was only a Belgian dialect that the whites used when they wanted to hide a conversation or to criticise the blacks⁶⁴.

⁶³ The former Senegalese president Abdou Diouf recounted how a phone call from a French official lasting several hours ended in disaster. While his interlocutor was asking him to use his popularity to force Africans to swallow the CFA franc devaluation they was planning, Diouf tried unsuccessfully to convince him that it would be disastrous for the economy and even for the regimes that France supported. The conversation became so heated that Diouf's wife thought her husband was in trouble and started praying next to him. The outcome was well known: it was a disaster, and even Diouf himself lost power.

⁶⁴ The Roman general Julius Caesar wrote in his '*De Bello Gallico*' (The Gallic War): '*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres (...). Hi omnes lingua, institutis, legibus inter se differunt. (...) Horum omnium fortissimi sunt Belgae*' (The whole of Gaul is divided into three parts, one of which is inhabited by the Belgians (...). These nations differed from one another in terms of language, institutions and laws. (...) Of all these people, the bravest are the Belgians).

Did the antagonism between the Flemish and the Walloons in the Congo affect the Congolese colonists?

It took the Congolese a long time to differentiate the two languages, initially believing that Flemish was the dialect whites used to prevent the Congolese from overhearing their secret conversations. Considered more French than the French themselves, colonising some African countries, the Walloon imposed unaccented French on the Congolese, while other African French colonies (Senegal, Cameroun, etc.) speak French with their local languages' accents. In writing, the Belgians in Congo remained close to the Bantu languages and the Latin pronunciation: Congolese use 'U' instead of the other Francophone Africans writing and reading 'OU' when writing African names: Congolese 'Mbu', 'Ndulu', 'Mukulumbundu' and 'Mbamu' are written 'Mbou', 'Ndoulou', 'Moukouloundou' and 'Mbamou' by other African francophones and they also double the DRC's 's': 'kiese/kiesse', 'Masamba/Mas-samba', and so on. The DR Congolese use 'septante' and 'nonante' for the numbers '70' and '90', respecting Latin etymology, instead of 'soixante-dix' and 'quatre-vingt-dix', as other francophone use. The Belgian-Walloon grammar book author Maurice Grevisse's '*Précis de grammaire*' is very popular in the DRC. In an interview, a Catholic nun expressed her frustration when she arrived in Congo before 1960, as, despite having graduated from the Catholic University of Leuven, where she studied in Dutch, she needed to learn French at night, and teach it in a high school the next day!

What can the Belgians be accused of in the Congo that remains unforgotten today?

The Democratic Republic of the Congo's independence on June 30, 1960, remains unfinished business. It's not that the Belgians tiptoed out of the country; rather, the Congolese are still in a state of 'independence cha-cha', with a few exceptions: they still don't govern themselves. Unlike other colonies, Belgium did not train the Congolese to run their own country one day. When Congo gained independence, it had only around ten academics, most of whom had never worked anywhere, compared to Senegal and other African countries, as their leaders were already trained and even served as MPs and ministers in the French parliament and government. The economic divorce negotiations with the Brussels Round Table in May were also disastrous for the newly independent Congo. Under pressure from the Congolese themselves, Belgium

gave the impression that it wanted to get rid of Congo when, with the CIA, they trained Congolese politicians in corruption: they corrupted them, especially those involved in Lumumba's assassination. This negative, corrupt political culture, for which the Belgians must bear full responsibility, persists in the Congo to this day⁶⁵. Even though Africans and Congolese can no longer blame colonialism alone for the failures of post-independence governance, some historical mistakes and gaps will take years to correct and fill: 140 years after the Berlin Conference and 60 after independence, the Congolese and Africans must also take responsibility for their mistakes and the bad culture of stealing money from their countries and keeping it in Western banks. It is disheartening that even intellectuals and individuals who have visited and lived in other countries and experienced their governance cannot suggest an alternative for Congo.

Why are the Congolese nostalgic about Belgian colonisation?

As a Congolese proverb states, *when you sleep on an empty stomach, you dream of having a stomach full of good food*. The ongoing Congolese misery, its quasi-endemic poverty, and mismanagement of their country, as their post-independence leaders are worse than the Belgians, made the Congolese nostalgically remember the Belgians, blame independence, or still wait for another real one, and also made some Belgians remain with a nostalgic colonial Congo dream. The latter consider the first as their '*noko*' (uncles in Lingala) and hold the Flemish in high regard for their hard work during the colonial period. The Belgians also instilled a sense of superiority in the Congolese, as Congo was the only Belgian colony, and as Leopoldville was the most beautiful city in Africa, the Congolese nicknamed it '*Poto moindo*' (Black Europe), a sense further reinforced with the establishment of Lovanium University and the Université Officielle

⁶⁵ When the Colonel Mobutu made his first coup, on September, 14, 1960 and ousted the head of State Kasa-Vubu and the Prime Minister Lumumba, ousting in fact the later as the CIA he was working for ordered him, and appointed universities students he named '*le Collège des Commissaires Généraux*' (The College of General Commissioners), in an interview, some didn't know how to run a country since they weren't politicians and never worked before. It resulted in messy decision-making, some of which was carried out by the real masters of the Congo at the time: the CIA and Belgium, via the ministers' advisers. However, not all of these countries had the same interests. It was in this chaotic situation described by Andrée Blouin as a 'Babel Tower' (around Lumumba) that Lumumba was assassinated.

du Congo-Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi, which accepted foreign students. Mobutu, who seized power on 24 November 1965, further strengthened this sense of Congolese pride, which cemented the country's unity for a long time. One of the MPR party's famous slogans in Lingala was: *'Zairois tolo vimbisa'*, meaning *'Zairois, you must always (puff out your chest) be proud and arrogant'*. In an essay, Professor Ndolamb Ngokwey revisits this topic: *"Another illustration of the political aim of being the powerhouse of Central Africa, or even Africa, is the 'Objective 80' program. Launched in the early 1970s, this ten-year development program aimed to place the country at the forefront of socio-economic development by 1980. In his speech, which was broadcast hundreds of times on national radio and television, Mobutu repeatedly stated: "First place, yes; second place, yes; third place, 'likambo te'/it doesn't matter; but the fourth place, 'toboyi'/we refuse it. NEVER". The ambition to be among the leaders was clearly expressed, even if I don't remember any report drawn up in 1980 on the Objective 80. Without indulging in any nostalgia for the Democratic Republic of the Congo's so-called golden age, the cultural and diplomatic vitality of this period is beyond question"* (Ngokwey, 2025: 34-35).

Could it be any positive beyond such nostalgic thoughts?

There's no doubt that Belgium has unparalleled historical expertise on the Congo, having managed it from 1885 to 1960 — 75 years — as well as for the next five years after independence and President Mobutu's 32 years. Everyone around the world considers Belgium to be the reference for the DRC. It would certainly be interesting for that Belgian voice about the DRC to be used to bring about real change in the Congo and for the benefit of Belgium. The DRC and Belgium are now led by new leaders who do not always positively use historic foundations. Perhaps the Congolese expect more from a Belgium that can no longer play Saint Nicholas for the Congo. However, there is a shared heritage that could be put to good use: the Congolese diaspora in Belgium could act as a bridge for the benefit of both countries and people, moving from nostalgia's *'pontius pilatism'* to challenges to face courageously. Both sides' intelligence reservoirs need to be used. There are moving accounts of missionaries and European administrators who distinguished themselves through their love for the Congolese people they wished to help. One doctor recounted how, upon arriving in the Congo, he had to work non-stop day and night, quickly training

local assistants and using all his expertise to make disinfectant alcohol, perform amputations, treat onchocerciasis patients and advise pregnant women on reducing the number of childbirth-related deaths. He was able to treat tropical diseases such as sleeping sickness and smallpox, as well as infections such as tetanus and intestinal worms, which traditional African healers and diviners were unable to cure. This sense of sacrifice or even faith in God led them to live in remote areas, alone or in pairs, where they built churches, schools and other buildings to modern standards, bringing a glimmer of modernity to these lost corners of the world.

What about the Belgians?

Even long after Congo gained independence, many Belgians who lived in the Congo remained nostalgic about their former colony and could talk of nothing else. After the Congo's independence, they often exclaimed, *'Tout ça ne nous rendra pas le Congo'*⁶⁶ (All this won't give us back the Congo), lamenting the loss of such a mighty, rich and large colony.

Did any Africans or Congolese fight against colonialism and slavery?

Africans and Black people have never passively accepted the slave trade, colonisation or neo-colonialism. They fought back, even if they lost. They developed resilience. Many of those who resisted colonialism, Christianity and Islamisation were arrested and killed, and their stories remain unwritten, untold and undisclosed. Queen Nzinga Mbande, for example, also known as Anna Zingha, commanded a disciplined army in the Ambundu kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba, in modern-day Angola, and was renowned for her skill in using poisonous arrows. When the slave trade began to decimate her kingdom and the Portuguese founded Luanda in 1576, these kingdoms suffered the same fate as the Kongo. She forced the Portuguese into signing a peace treaty with her in 1635 and reigned until she died in 1664, aged 82. However, due to her lack of heirs, the Portuguese invaded and colonised her kingdoms incorporated into modern-day Angola. Occasionally, we will also need to review some of the colonialists' leaders' actions regarding the abolition of the

⁶⁶In common Belgian parlance, this phrase, which became a Belgian RTBF television program Jean Libon and Marco Lamensch created in 2002, means that *'what we're talking about is something lost that we'll never be able to find again, no matter what we do or say, will be useless, it is a lost cause'*.

slave trade and slavery. Although slavery was abolished in France in 1794, when Napoleon Bonaparte returned to power, the fact that his 20 May 1802 decree reintroduced slavery raised reactions, hence Haiti's independence by Dessalines on 1 January 1804, after the Toussaint Louverture blacks' uprising. Consequently, when Victor Schoelcher signed the second decree abolishing slavery in 1848, the news was slow to reach the West Indies. In Martinique, where 75,000 slaves were still awaiting their freedom, Romain, a slave, banged his drum — a symbol of resistance — and the uprising began. He was arrested and sparked a revolt, resulting in the slavery abolition finally and definitively proclaimed on 22 May 1848, without waiting for confirmation from Paris.

Congo Independence: Thursday, 30 June 1960

How did the DR Congo gain independence?

Congo's independence and the subsequent crisis unfolded in a series of events. 1960 was proclaimed the '*Year of Africa*' by the UN, marking the independence of 17 African countries. This had a profound impact on the world and the African geopolitical landscape. Notably, the Republic of the Congo gained independence on Thursday, 30 June 1960. This was a country-continent surrounded by nine neighbours and the only Belgian colony. Belgium was faced with a dilemma: either abandon its Congo or adopt the risky strategy of granting independence with one hand and regaining it with the other. Throughout the pre-independence negotiations and treaties, Belgium deceived the Congolese. That was known as '*le pari Congolais*', the Congolese dilemma and challenge.

What else?

Belgium had neither prepared for nor considered the possibility of losing the Congo. However, pushed by the Congolese and considering how things were evolving, it finally gave the impression that it was tired of colonisation and wanted to relinquish its hold on the Congo. The Congolese politicians, meanwhile, were no longer willing to miss the opportunity to seize their independence, even though they had no clear idea of what it meant. Congo's independence became an equation with several unknowns.

1960: African independent countries and their presidents

1. Cameroon, from France/Great Britain, 1st January 1960, Ahmadou Ahidjo; 2. Togo, from France, 27 April 1960, Sylvanus Olympio; 3. Madagascar, from France, 26 June 1960, Philibert Tsiranana; 4. Democratic Republic of the Congo, then Republic of the Congo, from Belgium, 30 June 1960, Joseph Kasa-Vubu; 5. Somalia, from Italy and Great Britain, 1st July 1960, Aden Abdullah Osman Daar; 6. Benin, then Dahomey, from France, on 1st August 1960, Hubert Maga; 7. Niger, from France, 3 August 1960, Hamani Diori; 8. Burkina Faso, then Upper Volta/Haute-Volta, from France, 5 August 1960, Maurice Yaméogo; 9. Ivory Coast/Cote d'Ivoire, from France, 7 August 1960, Félix Houphouët-Boigny; 10. Chad, from France, 11 August 1960, François Tombalbaye; 11. Central African Republic, then Oubangui-Chari, from France, 13 August 1960, David Dacko; 12. Congo-Brazzaville, then the Congolese Republic, from France, 15 August 1960, (former Catholic Father) Fulbert Youlou; 13. Gabon, from France, 17 August 1960, Léon Mba; 14. Senegal, from France, 20 August 1960, after the break-up of the Federation of Mali, formed with the French Sudan, 17 January 1959, now Mali, Léopold Sédar Senghor; 15. Mali, formerly French Soudan/Soudan Français, 22 September 1960, after the break-up of the Federation of Mali, formed with Senegal 17 January 1959, which proclaimed its independence on 4 April 1960, independence recognised on 20 June 1960, Modibo Keita; 16. Nigeria, from Great Britain, on 1st October 1960, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa; 17. Mauritania, from France, on 28 November 1960, Moktar Ould Daddah.

How did the Congolese suddenly stand up for their independence, and how did the Belgian colonists respond?

In the years following the Second World War, independence became a matter of life and death for many colonised countries. The newly created United Nations and the two non-colonial powers that had emerged victorious from the war — the United States and the USSR — supported this movement. Belgium had no plans for the Congo, considered a peaceful and model colony, to become independent. However, the Congolese would not have to wait long. In December 1955, Jef Van Bilsen, a Belgian professor who had just returned from a few years' stay in the Congo, published a pamphlet in Dutch, *'De Gids op Maatschappelijk Gebied'*, translated into French in February 1956 as *'Un Plan de trente ans pour l'émancipation politique de l'Afrique Belge'*, which called for the Congo to gain independence gradually over thirty years — the time needed to train Congolese people to administer their own country. The

Belgians did not take this on board, as independence for the Congo, even in thirty years, was not on their agenda. In response to the Belgian document, the Congolese produced their first two political documents, two manifestos. The first title, '*Manifeste*,' was written by a group of lay Catholic intellectuals called '*Conscience Africaine*', led by Father Albert Malula, a black Catholic parish priest of Christ Roi of Dendale commune (now Kasa-Vubu), who received some special evening lessons of philosophy, sociology, etc. from professors of the newly established University of Lovanium. The second was published by the political party Alliance des Bakongo (ABAKO), led by Joseph Kasa-Vubu: unlike the first manifesto, the second called for immediate Congolese independence.

What were the events that led to Congolese independence?

A whole series of internal and external events occurred before 1960 making chancing the colonial world: General de Gaulle's 1944 speech in Brazzaville thanking Africans for helping France and granting them membership of the French Union, the Second World War and its aftermath, and the return of African veterans who had witnessed the vulnerability of white people and the Congolese Force Publique who realised that Belgium was not as powerful as it seemed in the Congo, the establishment of the UN in 1945 which declared an end to colonisation and affirmed the right of peoples to independence, the independence of Indonesia on 17 August 1945 and India on 15 August 1947, the defeat of France in Indochina in 1954, and the independence of Ghana in 1957 and Guinea Conakry in 1958, all this mixed with the founding of the first Congolese political parties, ABAKO, or 'Alliance des Bakongo,' whose president was Joseph Kasa-Vubu; the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), whose president was Lumumba; the creation of the Catholic Lovanium University in Leopoldville in 1954, which was popular because of its atomic centre — the first in Africa — and, in 1956, the official University of Elisabethville in Katanga, where the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, Africa's largest mining company, was based. In 1955, the new, young Belgian king, Baudouin, visited the Congo and was nicknamed 'Bwana Kitoko' ('*beautiful young man*'). In 1956, some selected Congolese, including Lumumba, were invited to Belgium, and in 1958, Belgium organised the Brussels World Fair, to which 600 Congolese were invited and spent six months in Belgium, where some participants decided to found a national political party upon

their return, which they finally did in 1958. They named this party the Mouvement National Congolais, and Lumumba was elected its president. France also organised a referendum for its colonies to decide whether to remain in the French Empire/Community or become independent. While the president, Charles de Gaulle, who was popular for having won the war, believed in a resounding ‘yes,’ Guinea-Conakry, led by Sékou Touré, voted ‘no’ and gained independence in 1958. In retaliation, the French organised counterfeit currency operations in Guinea and even attempted to assassinate Sékou Touré, in the hope of deterring other African leaders from seeking their countries’ independence. However, this was in vain, as almost all of them gained independence within two years. Sékou Touré thus became, with his alter ego Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, the driving force behind sub-Saharan independence and turned to the Russians, who established him as a key player in their Francophone African influence. Sékou Touré supported Lumumba, whose speech on 30 June 1960 was inspired by Sékou Touré’s “no” to the French president Charles de Gaulle. Ahmed Sékou Touré even offered to send Lumumba a plane or provide any other support when he escaped Leopoldville, as, after leaving his official residence on the Tilkens avenue, Lumumba briefly visited the Guinean embassy. Unfortunately, he refused crucial assistance from Sekou Toure, who suggested sending him a helicopter to get him out of Leopoldville, which could have changed the course of history; he naively thought that they would easily and quickly reach Stanleyville (now Kisangani) by car.

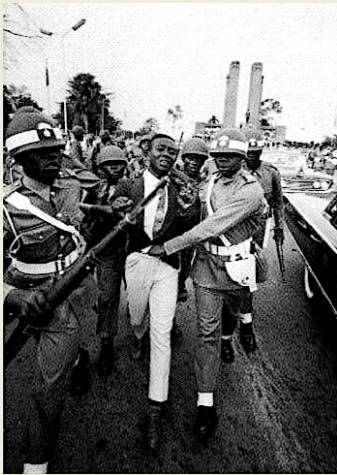
What caused the cracks in colonisation and triggered Congo’s independence?

The riots in Leopoldville on 4 January 1959 became the catalyst for the DRC’s independence. It was again the same Patrice Lumumba who triggered the riots. A week early, on December 28, 1958, he organised the first public meeting by a Congolese person in the Place de Kalamu, attended by 7.000 people, including members of his party, the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), to whom he reported on their participation with Joseph Ngalula and Gaston Diomi, all of the political MNC were invited to the 8–13 December 1958’s First All-African People’s Conference (AAPC) in Accra, attended by delegates from 23 countries, and organised by the Prime Minister on Ghana — independent in 1957, the first sub-Saharan country to become independent — and later President on 1st July 1960, Francis Kwame Nkrumah with the key message that independence is a right,

not a gift, and that this sentiment was spreading throughout Africa. Upon returning to Leopoldville, Lumumba held a public meeting on 28 December 1958, which was overwhelmed by the MNC; a week later, to prevented Lumumba and his MNC from gaining the upper hand, and led by Joseph Kasa-Vubu, as the most rooted in Leopoldville (province), the ABAKO decided to revive its members, the most established in Leopoldville, decided to organise its meeting on 4 January 1959 at Renkin's (now Matonge) YMCA. Unfortunately, misunderstandings between ABAKO leaders and the Leopoldville Mayor caused the first to cancel it. As it was during the first New Year weekend, Leopoldville Mayor's reply letter allowing the meeting only if the ABAKO could assess its own capacity to maintain public order, arrived only on the morning of 4 January. ABAKO members, who had arrived in their thousands, to whom it was already explained that the meeting would take place a few days later, and as they began to desert the site, they met and mixed with supporters of the Victoria team, now Vita Club, who had returned in anger from King Baudouin stadium, after losing the football match against the small Mikado team, and a Belgian policeman who arrived and, not knowing what had happened, sowed confusion, and this was the start of the riots of Leopoldville had never seen: four days of rioting, taking a heavy toll with almost a hundred people killed, shops and public buildings, including nearby Catholic parishes, were burnt and vandalised and nuns raped. It was a city turned upside down, with demonstrators shouting everywhere: '*Lipanda*', '*Kimpwanza*' and '*Uhuru*', meaning 'independence' in Lingala, Kikongo and Swahili; and they were insulting the Belgians and colonialism. The myth of a calm Congo and Belgian colonisation model had truly come to an end. No one predicted those riots⁶⁷. And, it seems that the entire Congolese history is shaped by the **4 January 1959 syndrome**: the Congolese legendary calm, like lake waters, which, at the slightest gust of wind, stir up waves. The Belgians were shocked and woke up from a deep sleep.

⁶⁷ Legend has it that the Bakongo of Abako were supported by a short, almost ogre-like, mystical soldier whom they called 'Makesa' and who came at night to help the Congolese and inflict losses on the whites.

**Ambroise Boimbo: some of Robert Lebeck's
masterpieces pictures — Leopoldville, 29 June 1960**



What was the reaction of the Belgians, and what happened later?

The army, including fighter jets, was called in to support the police. It took several days for calm to return to the capital. All the leaders of ABAKO, including its president, Joseph Kasa-Vubu, were

arrested and subjected to a highly politicised trial. On 13 January 1959, the Belgian government released a statement, including a royal message from King Baudouin promising to lead the Congo towards independence. The main Congolese political parties and their leaders adopted this cause: The Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA) of Antoine Gizenga, Pierre Mulele and Cléophas Kamitatu; the Centre de Regroupement Africain (CEREA) of Anicet Kashamura; the Baluba de Katanga (BALUBAKAT) of Jason Sendwe; the Confédération Nationale du Katanga (CONAKAT) of Moïse Tshombe and Godefroid Munongo; The Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) split into the MNC/Lumumba and the MNC/Kalonji, and the Parti National du Progrès (PNP) had a non-independence tendency, hence its nickname 'Parti des Nègres Payés' (the Party of the Bribed Negroes) or 'Pene-pene na mindele' (close to the whites). Belgium, therefore, convened a political Round Table in Brussels from 20 January to 20 February 1960, and an economic one in May, to decide on the future of the Congo, where one hundred Congolese leaders worked alongside their Belgian counterparts. Much to the Belgians' surprise, the Congolese raised the issue of an independence date on the open day, and Belgians and Congolese participants unanimously agreed that independence should be granted on 30 June 1960. In truth, it was another disappointing start for the Congo: within four months, elections had to be organised, a currency had to be minted, a police force and an army had to be set up, and administrative staff had to be trained, policies to be voted, institutions for the new republic to be settled, and elected leaders also needed to learn how to run a country. This complex situation foreshadowed the crisis that would follow.

What contribution did Lumumba make to those talks?

When the Congolese delegates arrived in Brussels, Lumumba had just been arrested following his meeting in Stanleyville and was imprisoned in disgrace in Jadotville, Katanga. The Congolese required his presence; otherwise, they would have walked out. Belgium was forced to release him, and he arrived in Brussels on the day that independence was set to be granted. Lumumba had campaigned for a Belgian-Congolese community in which, due to the lack of trained manpower, the Belgians would manage and gradually train the Congolese, who would then take over the jobs once independence was achieved. However, as he arrived late, he had no choice but to accept the decision that the Congolese had already

made especially as they also signed an agreement, united and acted since with one voice under the umbrella of the 'Front Commun', led by their elder: Jean Bolikango, who had already dreamed of becoming the next president and had bought his presidential suit. Although Lumumba had promised to support him, he reneged on his promise and backed Kasa-Vubu instead. The election campaign in May 1960 was another tragicomedy. Some politicians claimed to have '*independence in their pockets*', others saying that the dead would return on Independence Day, or that mango leaves would become banknotes the day after independence, and that black people would turn to white men.

On that occasion, the song '*Indépendance Cha Cha*' has become synonymous with the date.

This song is further evidence of the nature of independence: a victory snatched from the jaws of defeat, an improvisation. No one on the Congolese side wondered what the day after would bring. A new man, the politician, kept spreading fantasies and false dreams using demagogical speeches with sweet words. Having worked at the European Economic Community in Brussels and being one of the first Congolese to graduate from a European university, Thomas Kanza thought that, to avoid Congolese politicians feeling isolated during the Round Table conference held in winter, he invited Congolese musicians to enliven the evenings with African music. Congolese rumba had already gained popularity, and serious impresarios, including Belgians, Greeks and Jews, ran recording studios and bands, mainly in Leopoldville, the capital. Among those selected musicians who travelled to Brussels were Roger Izeidi, Nicolas Kasanda, Charles Mwamba, Pierre Lutula, Armand Mwango (also known as Brazzos), the acting leader of them, Joseph Kabasele, who founded in 1953 his African Jazz band to be also used as their label when in Brussels, and finally Vicky Longomba, who also received at the same time another offer from a Brussels recording business that needed Congolese musicians to record new songs; Longomba also targeted the same musicians as they were friends. When in Brussels, they successfully performed each evening after the Round Table sessions, especially at the Plaza Hotel, not far from Place Louise, where many Congolese politicians stayed. Celebrating a special Congolese evening, at Thomas Kanza's request, Joseph Kabasele improvised a session during which he composed the song '*Indépendance cha cha*'. Other musicians contributed to the piece. '*Indépendance cha cha*,

tozwi e! O Kimpwanza cha cha tubakidi! O Table Ronde cha cha ba gagner oh! Indépendance cha cha tozwi e! Bolikango, Kasa-Vubu and Lumumba mpe Kalonji. O ya Tshombe, Kamitatu, o Esanja, Mbuta Kanza!' (Independence cha-cha, we got it! They won it during the Round Table). Quickly recorded and radio-broadcast, it became the flagship song of African independence, and the DRC even used it as a national anthem on Independence Day, as it did not have one.

This is how and why the 1960s Congolese crisis happened!

The seeds of the crisis had been sown on the Congolese and the new republic's future; avoiding them would be a miracle that had only happened once a century. After the Round Table concluded on 20 February, the Congolese had just four months to learn how to manage the state, organise banks and currency, draft a constitution, manage an army, organise elections, make appointments, and interpret texts, official treaties and international agreements, to name but a few of their many tasks. Everything was set up to create chaos for the novice, self-taught Congolese politicians, including Patrice Lumumba. And so it proved. Voluntarily or involuntarily. Consciously or unconsciously. Rather than the Congolese and Belgian leaders taking control of history and events, it was the latter that was in command. It was the Nigerian Chinua Achebe's classical novel, *'Things Fall Apart'*. Or as the British writer Herbert George Wells stated it about the First World War, *'Every intelligent person knew that disaster was imminent and did not know how to avoid it,'* a quotation which was once displayed in Dutch, English and French at the entrance to the *In Flanders Fields* First World War Museum in Ypres, Belgium. The Democratic Republic of the Congo's independence was similar: everyone could see the disarray and crises to come because of improvisations, but no one had the strength to stop or avoid them, with their consequences still being felt today. Therefore, during the initial weeks of independence, an extraordinary crisis unfolded: an army mutiny led to the departure of all Belgians from the administration and army in July 1960 and the Congo experienced a vacuum of civil servants and army chiefs; Belgium had not trained Congolese people and there were only around twenty university graduates for a country of 2,345,000 km² and 15 million inhabitants. As a new UN member, Congo requested its help. Unfortunately, the UN embarked on an unprecedented experience in the Congo: establishing Blue Helmets

assistance in a country the size of a continent. Furthermore, Congo became a front line in the Cold War that the US and their Belgian, French and British allies could never lose to the Union of Socialist and Soviet Republic, USSR; the first perceived invisible Russian and communist hands everywhere, otherwise they had even to invent Russian allies to justify their dark agendas in the Congo and they quickly portrayed Patrice Lumumba as a pro-Russian, what he was not and was not also a communist.

And here is Patrice Emery Lumumba in action again.

Congo management became a challenge. As with the prosperity dreams of independence, none of the Congolese wanted to be forgotten from the postcolonial part of the cake that the Belgians would hand them before their departure. As they needed to elect new politicians to replace the Belgians, the May 1960 elections became coloured with ethnic groups and the tribes' flags: each of the 300 tribes wanted their leader to be on the frontline, as those leaders also resorted to those tribes as their electoral stronghold. The proclamation of Congo's independence on Thursday, 30 June 1960, became the epicentre of a tragicomedy: the Congolese leaders were ill-prepared and not up to the task, and the involvement of foreign actors further complicated matters. While the political Round Table secured Congo's independence on 30 June 1960, the second economic one in May 1960 was a fiasco. As the Congolese politicians returned for the elections, the Belgians manipulated the Congolese participants, mainly students. Lumumba's character embodied those years of independence, known as the '*Lumumba years*'. Having become a political animal, Patrice Lumumba and his party, the MNC, emerged victorious in the May 1960 elections. This came as a shock to the Belgians, who had not seen Lumumba coming and had no idea that he would become one of the country's most important figures. Furthermore, they decided to cut him off at the knees to prevent him from forming a government. Lumumba took a risk and skilfully signed a government agreement with the PSA, the CERECA and other unitary and nationalist political parties. This agreement was kept secret, but was made public by Andrée Blouin, who was expelled from Leopoldville by the Belgians. She summoned the entire press on his transit in Rome for back to Conakry, and Belgium only learned of it via the international press and had no choice but to restore Lumumba's rights. He became the first Congolese Prime Minister, formed the first Congolese government of national unity and

coalition. It was a challenge. And, with a majority in both chambers, Patrice Lumumba also backed Joseph Kasa-Vubu, who became the first Congolese president, instead of Jean Bolikango, whom he had promised before.

How were the celebrations marking the independence of the Congo organised in Leopoldville on Thursday, 30 June 1960?

King Baudouin arrived on 29 June, preceded by the Belgian government and guests from major countries around the world, including the USSR and the US, whose newly appointed CIA director, Devlin, subsequently became the main post-colonial Congo protagonist. An incident occurred when a Congolese man named Ambroise Boimbo stole the King's sword. This was captured in one of the ten masterpieces of photography. That same evening, Belgium and the Congo signed a friendship treaty. The morning of 30 June began with an official *Te Deum* in the Catholic Cathedral of Sainte Anne, attended by King Baudouin, Presidents Kasa-Vubu and Fulbert Youlou of Brazzaville, and other distinguished guests. The official independence ceremony began at 9:00 am at the Palais de la Nation, opening with a speech by King Baudouin, who praised Belgian colonisation in the footsteps of his ancestor, King Leopold II. President Joseph Kasa-Vubu then thanked King Baudouin and praised the independence. These were the only two scheduled official speeches of the day.

The first injury or the crack of independence – did it happen at that point?

Patrice Lumumba who received from his own channel a copy of President Joseph Kasa-Vubu's official speech of the day and not officially as it normally needed to be done, as according to the Congolese constitution, *la Loi Fondamentale*, King Baudouin promulgated a week before the independence, and copied from the Belgian model, it was the Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba who governed; the President, a symbolical character, only reigned. This means that, normally, it would have been Prime Minister Lumumba and his government who could have drafted President Joseph Kasa-Vubu's speech. Lumumba found it inconceivable that, on such a memorable day, those who had fought should not be recognised, while King Baudouin's speech praised his ancestor, King Leopold II, and the Kasa-Vubu was a half-flattering one. Then Lumumba stood up and delivered an impromptu speech that would become the basis of his popularity, but also a *casus belli* for him.

Addressing first *“the freedom fighters who are victorious today”*, he deviated from protocol, which would have required him to address the King first and then the notables. He listed the abuses and hardships endured during the colonial period, concluding with the words, *“All that, my brothers, is now over as I speak to you”*. He spoke proudly of being on an equal footing with the former colonising nation, Belgium. He concluded by appealing for the reconstruction of a prosperous Congo, which he believed his government could achieve. *‘This independence,’* Lumumba stated, *‘is not a gift, but a victory won through battles in which the Congolese perished.’* The King, the colonists, and the powerful Catholic hierarchy in attend-



From left to right: Joseph Ilele, Joseph Kasavubu, Patrice Lumumba, Justin Bomboko and King Baudouin

ance felt all offended by Lumumba’s independence of spirit and his unexpected speech, which was the longest of the day, interrupted by rounds of applause. They considered it a crime of *lèse-majesté*.

Patrice Lumumba’s speech sparked the war against him!

On that same day, the Belgian establishment and the CIA decided to assassinate Lumumba — or, to use their more polite term, to remove him. They labelled him a pro-Russian communist, and his speech became a *casus belli*. Due to the Cold War, the USA needed a scapegoat, but it didn’t have to create one as Lumumba offered himself up: his character. The machine was set in motion, with internal and external webs. Lumumba’s chances of survival were slim to none, and the Congolese people were held hostage! After the official celebration, the Belgian and Congolese governments signed Congo’s

official declaration of independence, and celebrations took place everywhere: From Thursday to Sunday night, there were football matches, music and dancing. But on Monday morning, it was time to face the reality of independence, especially for the army, which was angry at being forgotten.

How did they act to assassinate Lumumba, and what were their motives?

As soon as Lumumba became Prime Minister and began to behave as an independentist, anti-colonialist and nationalist, the United States of America Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Belgian secret services, considering him a danger to their interests, decided to sideline him. They branded operations under the code names 'PRO' by the CIA and 'Operation Barracuda' by Belgium to assassinate him. In September 1960, Larry Devlin, the CIA Leopoldville director, received a top-secret telegram announcing that a spy named 'Joe from Paris' would arrive with a lethal poison to contaminate Lumumba's toothpaste, causing him to contract poliomyelitis and to die. However, Devlin said he rejected the plan, calling it demonic, and was informed that it was the USA President Eisenhower's decision. He surely trusted his Congolese informants, including his protégé Mobutu, whom he was paying, advising and commanding: they could help to complete the task, and achieve the same main objective.

Lumumba's assassination: USA, Belgium, UK, the UN...

How did Lumumba's assassination happen?

The context: the Congo crisis began with the mutiny of Congolese soldiers, who arrested their Belgian officers and raped Belgian women. They felt that independence had been granted only to civilians, as they had not received any benefits and remained with their colonial rank and denomination. It was the Belgian army commander-in-chief, General Emile Janssens, who added fuel to the fire. On 5 July, at Camp Léopold II (now Camp Kokolo), he wrote on the blackboard: **'Before independence = after independence'**, a phrase that was poorly received by the Congolese soldiers, who were angry about not receiving bonuses or promotions during the independence celebrations. This was the start of the mutinies. The general and other officers left for Belgium, leaving a power vacuum in the army. The Lumumba government and the head of state, Kasa-Vubu, quickly met and changed the name of the army from

Leopold II's 'Force Publique' to the National Congolese Army. Lumumba also appointed Victor Lundula to the rank of general as the new commander-in-chief, and Joseph Mobutu, a former sergeant who had been discharged from the army and was now secretary of state, to the rank of colonel as the national army chief of staff. Due to the Belgians' hasty departure without consulting the Congolese government, Belgium made the mistake of invading the Congo on 10 July 1960, and the Congolese army resisted.

The UN also became involved in the Congo crisis.

Prime Minister Lumumba and his government sought assistance from the UN, which deployed its first peacekeeping operation since its establishment, along with Haitians, to teach in schools and manage administration. This was a challenged operation, as the country resembled a continent. The new UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, quickly set up a 'Congo Crisis' group in his office to make decisions, although none of the members were well-informed or had much documentation about what was happening in Congo. Another crisis arose on top of the existing one: Moïse Tshombe and Albert Kalonji, who had opposed Lumumba even before independence and refused to become ministers in the new government, declared their provinces' independence—Katanga on 11 July 1960 and South Kasai on 8 August 1960, respectively—mainly supported by Belgium, which profited from these minerals, as millions of Belgians still worked at the UMHK, the Katanga mining company. This was a loss for Lumumba's central government, which had to fight on two fronts: filling the vacuum left by the Belgians' departure and reintegrating the two provinces into the central government. He wanted UN support, but unfortunately, Dag Hammarskjöld, the Swedish UN Secretary-General, refused to get involved in internal Congolese affairs or to intervene in these rebellions. The subsequent events were disastrous for the Congo and all those involved in its administration. The country became a melting pot of theories, theorists, and newcomers since the Lumumba government, comprising only three academics, was not equipped to handle the crisis. Only Belgians, Americans, and others, who were merely there to safeguard their interests, could act.

What was the turning point in the Congolese crisis?

Congo was on the brink of chaos. Then, on 5 September 1960, President Kasa-Vubu further worsened the situation by unconstitutionally dismissing Prime Minister Lumumba. Lumumba refused to

accept this and also dismissed the President, creating significant disorder at the highest levels of government. Colonel Mobutu intervened on 14 September 1960, neutralising both the President and his Prime Minister, and called back Congolese students from European and local new Lovanium universities to help run the country. He designated them as “Les commissaires généraux”. However, the CIA and the Belgians worked with President Joseph Kasavubu, who resumed his position, and with Colonel Joseph Mobutu to isolate Lumumba, who was legally supported by the Congolese parliament and senate. The legal dispute then moved to the United Nations, where two delegations represented the Congo: Minister to the UN Thomas Kanza for the Patrice Lumumba government and Justin Bomboko representing President Joseph Kasavubu.

What was Patrice Lumumba’s reaction and behaviour?

After numerous attempts to arrest Lumumba and his supporters by Colonel Mobutu, and especially after Lumumba’s delegation was ousted from the UN, making believing to Lumumba that his fate was already sealed, and his arrest planned, as also he was under house arrest, guarded by UN Blue Helmets, with a belt of Congolese soldiers ready to arrest him, all his supporters left for their electoral stronghold of Stanleyville (now Kisangani) to precede their leader Lumumba, who was to join them, and from there, they could reconquer their power. Disclosed archives now reveal that the CIA sold this plan to Lumumba’s allies, who unknowingly adopted it. After evading multiple arrests on his road to Stanleyville, a risky journey of almost 2.000 kilometres, crossing forests and mainly rivers where the ferries were not on time, and Lumumba’s impromptu meetings, at the invitation of his devoted people, which slowed down his convoy and caused information about his route to reach his Leopoldville enemies. Time was not on his side. Mobutu’s soldiers under the command of pro-Mobutu’s Major Gilbert Mpongo finally arrested him on the right bank of the Sankuru River, at Bolongo, at around 1:00 am on 2nd December 1960. He was taken back to Lodi on the left bank and, from there, to Port-Francqui, now Ilebo. That same afternoon, an aeroplane sent to Port-Francqui with Gilbert Mpongo returned, landed at N’Djili airport and disembarked with Patrice Lumumba, Jacques Lumumba, Mushungu and Bondhe, who had all their hands tied behind their backs and were taken to Colonel Joseph Mobutu’s residence and later to Victor Nendaka’s secret residence dungeon,

where angry soldiers beat and manhandled them. Two days later, the Leopoldville regime decided to send them to prison at the Thysville military camp (now Mbanza-Ngungu). The CIA, Belgium and their Congolese allies, including Kasa-Vubu, Victor Nendaka, Justin Bomboko and Kandolo Damien, finally decided to send Lumumba to Elisabethville⁶⁸.

What happened later?

It was a real Via Dolorosa for them. On 17 January 1961, Patrice Lumumba, Minister and General Maurice Mpolo and the President of the Senate, Joseph Okito, who had been forced to accompany him, were been boarded on a DC-4 plane for a long journey from Moanda, in the extreme south west near Atlantic, to Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi) in south east side, a transfer the Belgians negotiated between Joseph Kasa-Vubu and Moses Tshombe, which the latter, after a refusal and hesitation, accepted the deal. During the six-hour flight with two ‘commissaires généraux’, Ferdinand Kazadi and Jonas Mukamba, hating Lumumba, the Baluba soldiers inside (certainly also the two commissaires), beat the three so severely that they were almost dead, but still conscious, when they arrived at 16.00. They were taken to a villa Brouwez near Luano airport, where Katangese soldiers and ministers, including Godefroid Munongo and Jean-Baptiste Kibwe, having promised Lumumba death if he ever set his feet on Katanga soil, beat them again, joined later by their President, Moses Tshombe.

And then came the decision to assassinate them...

Tshombe was led the self-independent Katanga province, and during a brief meeting between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. where they all drank whisky and spirits until they were drunk, following a lengthy debate, during which Tshombe appeared to be opposed to the idea of killing them, Munongo — the powerful Katangese right-wing minister — and the other ministers had the final say: they decided to kill them. They returned to the villa with a peloton of Katangese soldiers under

⁶⁸ Regarding Lumumba's assassination, apart famous books, including the Belgian Ludo de Witte one at the origin of the Belgian parliamentary investigation commission, it work with interviews of living witnesses and actors, allows to know what happened and how it happened. Chambre des représentants de Belgique, *Enquête parlementaire visant à déterminer les circonstances exactes de l'assassinat de Patrice Lumumba et l'implication éventuelle des responsables politiques belges dans celui-ci. Rapport fait au nom de la commission d'enquête*, Volume I et II, Bruxelles, novembre 2001.

Belgian command, collected the three leaders from Leopoldville, drove a few kilometres away near the village of Shilatembo: placed one by one in front of a tree, Okito, Mpolo, and then Lumumba were shot at around 9.00 p.m. and quickly buried in the bush. One of the Belgian soldiers who worked for Katanga, who had seen the three prisoners alive upon their arrival, explained how he left the building at approximately 8 p.m. on 17 January 1961 after locking the three in a safe room. When he returned by midnight, he only found emptiness. After receiving the information, he remained silent, saying: *'The less we know, the better.'*

What happened following this assassination?

Days later, rumours about the assassination began to emerge, particularly since the Katangese minister could not explain what had happened to the three leaders from Leopoldville. A month later, Munongo was forced to admit the assassination, but no one believed his explanation that the villagers had captured and killed them as they escaped. When news of the assassination broke, it caused a global uproar. To avenge Lumumba, his supporters from Stanleyville, led by Gizenga, launched a rebellion later strengthened by a faction led by Pierre Mulele from Kwilu province. Assisted by the CIA, the Belgians and mercenaries, Colonel Mobutu suppressed them.

How to describe Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito's assassination?

This assassination is a complex puzzle involving various individuals and intricate plans. After their murder on the night of 17 January 1961, everyone involved seemed awake from a deep sleep. As a Belgian soldier who was present predicted: *'We wanted Lumumba dead, now we have him in our hands, and we have to deal with it'*. It was as if someone tried to hide the white smoke after burning dry wood. The morning after 17 January, one of the Katanga ministers, who had drunk himself into a stupor the night before and attended the ministers' meeting and witnessed the assassination, began to talk about it. Tshombe called him to order to shut his mouth. No one wanted to be blamed for the tragedy, and everyone started playing Pontius Pilate and passing the buck. Of course, no one could have predicted it would unfold so quickly, catching everyone by surprise as if shadows had taken shape and ogres had become men.

What is your specific point about this assassination in your book ‘L’AUTRE LUMUMBA’?

The point of my book is that the Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito assassination is a puzzle where all the pieces needed to be gathered to get a clear picture. Lumumba’s assassination, as it occurred on 17 January 1961, was not premeditated in that way. It was a spider’s web with incredible ramifications and many actors, witnesses, keys and transitional and terminal agents, with each disclosure of state secrets archives adding a new element to the story. The latest, Johan Grimonprez’s “*Soundtrack to a Coup d’Etat*” film, for example, features how, without his knowledge and becoming a real turkey in the stuffing, the famous African-American jazz man Louis Armstrong became connected to Lumumba’s assassination, which intersected with the Cold War: the USA’s ambassador in Congo and his wife to play a false humanitarian role in Katanga, the CIA director Larry Devlin to collect information, and even Colonel Mobutu to meet Tshombe boarded the same musician’s plane from Leopoldville to Elisabethville! Another example. Andrée Blouin’s daughter explained that, according to Victor Nendaka, there were numerous drafts of Lumumba’s 30 June 1960 speech, but that Lumumba chose the one by his chief of protocol, Andrée Blouin. However, this is historically inaccurate, as Blouin had been expelled from Leopoldville for the first time days before independence, and Lumumba only made his speech decision on the 28th or 29th, when he realised that Kasa-Vubu had already shared his speech with the King, and vice versa, without informing him or his government. However, if Nendaka said so, it is evidence of how the CIA and other secret services considered Andrée Blouin the embodiment of Lumumba’s far-left ideology. There were many budgeted plans, some not interconnected, to assassinate Lumumba for protecting the ideological interests of capitalist countries and the West, who did not want the Congo to fall into Russian hands, a phobia and a matter of life and death during those Cold War years.

That assassination was a puzzle, you say!

For me, we must avoid explaining this tragedy and assassination through Manichaeism, moving between the ‘*conspiracy*’ and ‘*cock-up*’ theories of history, the first suggesting that historical events are the result from a secret plot by powerful people or groups managing and leading the world for their interests, while the second suggests that they are consequences of incompetence, accidents, and

unforeseen errors rather than deliberate planning or conspiracy. In my view, both factors were present in this assassination without either one being the sole cause. We should adopt one of these approaches, while bearing in mind the other and leaving a space for a third perspective, which should always be considered. Lumumba's assassination is a puzzle that ultimately escaped everyone's grasp and involved everyone. It looked like those laboratory experiments said could escape their creators and researchers, or like intelligent robots or current artificial intelligence, which we fear will become uncontrollable and harm their creators: humans. You have to immerse yourself in the historical context. For those assassination plans to appear to have a good conscience, they kept diplomatically using, even years after the assassination, humanistic-sounding words of *'to dismiss Lumumba only from power, to send him to a safe (golden) prison at Elisabethville.'* However, my point is that, that specific assassination on 17 January 1961 and the way it happened — including Okito and Mpolo added in the last minutes — on their arrival in Elisabethville, how they were beating during the flight from Moanda et Elisabethville, their assassination in the bush in the middle of the night, their quick burials and the disposal of the bodies later, the way they happened were not planned as they happened. It is certain that, according to some usual and similar *modi operandi*, Lumumba assassination planners made sure nothing escaped them; that the main objective of assassinating Lumumba was to be achieved, whatever happened; they had surely avoided each one with each plan to know the others and not to know if it would be either his plan or another's that would succeed. Analysts show that there surely were many plans, A, B, and C, etc., interconnected or not, but monitored remotely by decision-making terminals. Once the crime was committed, a complete disconnection occurred, with actors vacating, except for communications managers, who sought to avoid tracing back to the main decision-maker, in this case, the USA President Eisenhower, and, by extension, King Baudouin of Belgium, probably. They should be irresponsible to never be aware or informed about.



Okito Joseph – Lumumba Patrice – Mpolo Maurice

And the decision to send them to Elisabethville...

Sending Lumumba to Elisabethville would have meant death, but to Bakwanga, as it was planned, would be more certain — the macabre fate happened to the Lumumbists Jean-Pierre Finant, Camille Yangara, Jean-Pierre Elengesa, Jacques Fataki, Christophe Muzungu, and Emmanuel Nzuzi assassinated on their arrival at Bakwanga on 16 February 1961, Kamanga Grégoire the only one non-killed — as Albert Kalonji promised to “*drink from Lumumba’s skull*”, and who sent his soldiers including the brutal Zuzu, still wearing their Bakwanga’s military ranks on their epaulettes, to convoy Lumumba. Abandoning the last plan can thus mean that the Leopoldville executors (Kasa-Vubu, Mobutu, Nendaka, Bomboko, Kandolo, etc.) could mean them avoided their immediate deaths, even if they should know that sending them to Bakwanga or Elisabethville would result in the same fate; of course, Tshombe was a little civilised and had not radical views and hate on Lumumba (Thomas Kanza revealed how Tshombe unsuccessfully wanted to meet Lumumba after the independence for telling him important matters, even if he refused Lumumba invitation to be part of his government) than Kalonji. When he became Prime Minister, Cyrille Adoula, for example, said about Tshombe: ‘*I know the player and I know the game.*’ For me, the people responsible of that assassination are: Joseph Kasa-Vubu, the president, who endorsed its legal side by signing compromising documents of the transfer; Colonel Mobutu, who played a key role in the arrests; Victor Nendaka, who held a grudge against Lumumba as Lumumba’s former MNC party member where he was

expelled; Justin-Marie Bomboko⁶⁹, a CIA and Belgian Sureté agent, who quickly distanced from Lumumba and became his opponent as president of the new Mobutu's college of commissioners; Damien Kandolo, Lumumba's tribal brother, confidant and cabinet director, a British MI6 agent who forged lies and false documents against Lumumba; Major Gilbert Mpongo, who arrested Lumumba; Ferdinand Kazadi and Jonas Mukamba, who accompanied the three from Moanda to Elisabethville; Moses Tshombe, who accepted that Lumumba could be sent to Katanga and did not use his power to avoid them to be assassinated; Godefroid Munongo, who hated Lumumba and decided that the three must be eliminated and their bodies to disappear; all the Katanga ministers present at the meeting on 17 January, and who witnessed the assassination. The Belgians, British MI6, American President Eisenhower and the CIA, the anti-Lumumba's Brazzaville government of Youlou, the UN and its Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, for not helping leaders in danger.

How can we make sense of that assassination?

The real masterminds lurked in the shadows, remaining silent. The Belgian Colonel Vandewalle, who had arrived that same day, was taken aback to discover the next morning that the three, Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Okito and Maurice Mpolo, had already been assassinated the same night of their arrival. While on a previous day, Gérard Soete expressed his reservations, referencing the Nuremberg trials on the subject, days later, he became a macabre player in the series by disposing of the three bodies. This murder is a textbook case. In this 2025 centenary year of Patrice Emery Lumumba's birth, we may learn more about the circumstances surrounding his assassination.

What happened next?

⁶⁹ Whenever I was meeting the late Justin Bomboko, involved in Congolese history from the independence years until his death (10 April 2014), he was promised to write them before he died, but he never did. His grandsons — Olivier Kamitatu and Bomboko's daughter's sons — told me that their grandfather said to them to burn his archives and take his secrets to the grave, as they would cause an international catastrophe. Interesting to imagine how those boys were managing their relationship with their two grandfathers, Cléophas Kamitatu and Justin Bomboko, as they sometimes had opposite political appearances. In historical terms, this could be a gold mine.

Fortunately, a Congolese hunter and his son were returning from a hunt that night when they witnessed the entire assassination, hiding behind a termite mound. Days later, they returned to check what they had seen and were surprised to find men's hands emerging from the ground— they had been hastily buried close to midnight. Keeping quiet about it, they informed their local Catholic parish priest, who immediately telephoned Elisabethville, the capital. Godefroid Munongo, the Minister of the Interior, received the news and ordered the bodies to be reburied elsewhere, putting Gérard Soete, a Belgian soldier from Bruges, in charge. In an interview, Soete described what he and his brother Michel had done with the bodies that night. First, he dug up the three bodies and transported them 220 kilometres from the place of execution. There, they were hastily buried behind a termite mound in the middle of the wooded savannah. However, after carrying out this first macabre task, Godefroid Munongo changed his mind, deciding to dispose of the bodies to prevent Lumumba's grave, which was likely to become a pilgrimage site given his popularity, from being discovered, he instructed Soete to choose someone to help him, and the late chose his brother Michel, also a soldier, both working for the Katanga government. With a hacksaw, two large water bottles and a barrel of sulphuric acid, they carried out the dirty deed on the night of 22–23 January 1961. Having got drunk to build up courage, they spread out the bodies and poured acid over them. The hardest part was cutting them up before pouring in the acid until only a few teeth remained. The smell was overwhelming, and they had to wash it off three times, but they still felt dirty. Initially claiming to have kept two of Patrice Lumumba's teeth (one of which had gold on it) and a hand (or a finger?), Gerard Soete later retracted this, saying that he had kept only one tooth, which his daughter kept after his death. Like father, like daughter?

What about Lumumba himself? Did he make any mistakes?

The Cold War and its Congo frontline required a scapegoat and a cause for war. Patrice Lumumba's character and foresight ultimately proved to be his downfall. Admittedly, for some, he made some poor decisions that could have saved him; for example, he should not have left his residence guarded by the UN. The scene of the French army picking up President Laurent Gbagbo from his presidential palace and sending him to the ICC in The Hague, where he was later released as an innocent man after ten years, proves that Lumumba would eventually have been arrested and murdered, whether he left

his official residence or not. In my opinion, those who were aware of the context could have prevented this tragedy if they had avoided implementing anti-Lumumba decisions, as Larry Devlin once did; he refused the CIA's poison sent to him with an agent to assassinate Lumumba. Lumumba's unjust arrests, especially before the Round Table, also contributed to his frustration. And there is a matter of fate: Lumumba was destined to be a martyr hero, ready to sacrifice himself for the Congo. Poor Lumumba had little chance of surviving. His fate was already sealed: The Cold War's frontline moved to Africa, needed a *casus belli*, and Lumumba and the Congo were its ideal candidates. The US and Belgium had budgeted millions of dollars for the assassination plans.

Could the CIA and Belgian security forces claim that they were unaware of the tragedy?

It's indefensible. The entire country of Congo was under 24-hour surveillance by the CIA, Belgium and France, with the latter waiting for the former to tire and take over. In the mentioned recent film-documentary on the CIA's involvement in the assassination of Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito, as well as in the Congolese crisis, *'Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat'*, Devlin reveals that he has three agents in Lumumba's government. Also, the CIA's use of Louis Armstrong as a Trojan horse: invited to perform in the Congo during the war, in Leopoldville and, especially, in Elisabethville, as the CIA successfully infiltrated the city where Timberlake and his wife, who was acting as a human rights benefactor, Devlin who had lunch with Armstrong in Leopoldville without Armstrong to question who he was, which made Armstrong angry when he found out years later about the story⁷⁰. Also on the plane was Colonel Joseph Mobutu, who was collecting money from the wealthy province of

⁷⁰ Grimonprez, J. (Director). (2024). *Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat* (film), Belgium.

Katanga under Tshombe's control. Armstrong, nicknamed 'Satchmo' and praised in the Congolese musician Joseph Kabasele's



opus 'Okuka Lokole', arrived in Leopoldville from Brazzaville on 28 October 1960. He performed at the Stade Roi Baudouin that afternoon as part of a Pepsi Cola publicity event. The day after he performed in Elisabethville, where Lumumba was assassinated a month later. Did the CIA, which carried out

secret operations and information collecting when Armstrong was performing, travel in fact to ensure that the later assassination operation went smoothly? The secret services state that, to avoid certain field operations being compromised, it requires the physical presence on the ground of certain senior officers. Devlin confessed that his Washington headquarters instructed him to carry out the mission (to assassinate Lumumba) without arousing the President's suspicions. You have to wonder... Colonel BEM Frédéric Vandewalle, the former head of the Surêté du Congo, testified that he arrived in Elisabethville on the afternoon of 17 January 1961. He had been informed of the arrival of three packages and knew that they contained the three prisoners: Lumumba, Okito and Mpolo. He came to the airport to wait for them and saw them, from a distance, still alive and getting out of the aeroplane. The Belgian government organised and monitored the entire operation to pursue, imprison and transfer Lumumba.

And what about the Belgians, especially King Baudouin? What role did they play in Lumumba's assassination?

The Belgian Parliamentary Commission on Lumumba's assassination (23 March 2000–31 October 2001), established after Ludo de Witte's book *The Lumumba Assassination* (1999), revealed direct Belgian and their high-level authorities, including King Baudouin, involvement in Patrice Lumumba's assassination. The *casus belli* was what the Belgian establishment considered to be an insult to their

King: Lumumba's speech on 30 June 1960. There is more. Archival evidence shows that relations between the Belgian colonists in the Congo and Lumumba were already turbulent, particularly with the army's commander-in-chief, General Janssens.

What about “Le pari Congolais”

The Congo's independence was a battle between the Belgians' desire to avoid losing control of the Congo and the Congolese struggle for independence. In Belgian-Congolese relations, this is known as the '*Congolese gamble and challenge*' (*Le pari congolais*): how Belgium granted Congo independence without doing so. It was the cession of the mining provinces of Katanga and South Kasai that revealed Belgium's true intentions: Tshombe was welcomed in Brussels, and Belgium set up a special office and sent civil servants to work with Moses Tshombe's Katanga government. Tshombe even had Belgians (military) advisers, including Major Weber, who communicated directly with the Royal Palace.

Could they all normally save him?

In other words, if the Belgian government, the United Nations and the CIA had wanted to save Patrice Lumumba, they would have done so. They paid the Congolese people to restore order, and they all oversaw the operation in secret. Is Belgium still responsible for the Congolese crisis? It is clear that Belgium presents itself as an expert on the Congo and is consulted on Congo-related matters on the international stage. Therefore, the failure of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also, in a sense, the failure of Belgium.

Can you think of any stories that could be used as evidence?

Albert Kalonji (MNC/K), who was president of the MNC/K, was a fierce opponent of Lumumba (MNC/L). The MNC was founded by Catholics led by Father Joseph Malula, who would become the first cardinal of Kinshasa. Malula was a parish priest at Christ Roi in the Kasa-Vubu commune, where he organised evening courses and invited professors from Lovanium University to teach philosophy and sociology to Catholics gathered in an association called '*Conscience Africaine*'. Malula also founded a national political party in opposition to the tribal ABAKO. However, on election day, Lumumba, an outsider, emerged victorious — a result that the prelate would surely have rejected, as he had portrayed Lumumba as a communist, socialist and even an atheist. Considering himself more intelligent than Lumumba, Kalonji never took him seriously. When he established the Sud-Kasai state and accused Lumumba of

genocide against the Baluba people, he not only ordered the brutal murder of all Lumumbists sent to him, but also declared that he would drink from Lumumba's skull if he set foot in his state. According to archives and the CIA director, Larry Devlin, the CIA financially sponsored his entire anti-Lumumba campaign.

The CIA...

Following the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, his supporters, led by Vice-Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga, withdrew from Leopoldville and established a legal government in Stanleyville, which was especially supported by the Eastern countries. Larry Devlin claims that his spy in Pierre Mulele's circle once informed him that Mulele, who was also in Stanleyville, had urgently called for him to join a top-secret trip to Moscow. Devlin revealed that he had set up a secret communication system between them and facilitated his agent's journey to Stanleyville via Brazzaville. Devlin was informed of everything throughout the Lumumbists' trip to Moscow, especially during the return journey and stopovers. They received two suitcases of dollars from Moscow, which Devlin had coordinated and stolen from the Khartoum transit, causing the Lumumbists of Stanleyville to lose crucial financial support they had travelled for.

What happened once the assassination was made public?

Riots broke out everywhere, with people protesting against Belgium, the CIA and the UN. Buildings were destroyed, and Belgian embassies were burned. In New York, a huge demonstration inside the UN building interrupted the Security Council's meeting, leaving the overwhelmed UN Secretary-General to condemn the organisation itself. London organised one of the most impressive Lumumba demonstrations. On 19 February, 4,000 people gathered in Trafalgar Square in response to calls from the Movement for Colonial Freedom and the Committee of African Organisations. Speakers included Labour MP Fenner Brockway, Zambian leader Kenneth Kaunda, Zimbabwean leader Joshua Nkomo and Stansgate Viscount Anthony Wedgwood Benn. The crowd marched to the Belgian embassy, shouting 'Down with Belgium!', and clashed with the police. This resulted in arrests and injuries, including to the future South African president, Thabo Mbeki, who lost a tooth in the clash and decided never to have it replaced as a symbol of his pro-Lumumba resistance.

But what about the other tragedies that took place in the Congo during its years of independence?

For years, Lumumba's death has been a source of inspiration for Black independence and African nationalism. The Congo's path to independence was marked by tragedy, including the assassinations of Lumumba, Mpolo and Okito, as well as the death of UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld of Sweden. Following the declaration of independence in Katanga by Moïse Tshombe and in South Kasai by Albert Kalonji, the UN, invited by Lumumba's government, decided to prevent the balkanisation of the Congo. When the secessionists refused to cooperate, the UN sent its peacekeeping forces, led in Katanga by Conor Cruise O'Brien, the Secretary-General's special representative from Ireland. He decided to impose peace by force. Unfortunately, it was a disaster: UN soldiers committed atrocities that damaged the institution's reputation. Consequently, the UN Secretary-General decided to visit the Congo and negotiate with Tshombe. The meeting took place on 18 September 1961 in Ndola, the first Zambian town to border Katanga. While the Ndola airport control tower had already established contact with the UN aircraft that had left Leopoldville that morning and was attempting to land, the plane unexpectedly gained altitude. It was almost midnight. The next day, the crashed plane was found with all its occupants dead, including the Secretary-General. The only surviving bodyguard lived for a few hours before passing away. The cause of the crash remains unknown. Was it an accident or an attack? Access to secret archives is needed to solve the mystery. When Zambia gained independence, the UK seized their archives. Could they contain information that could incriminate the UK?

What role did other parties play in the Congo crisis?

Lumumba's assassination became a symbol of the West's paradox and Africans' disillusionment. He was the standard-bearer of the struggle and the resistance of fighters and anti-colonialists, as were African chiefs and leaders throughout history. During the Cold War, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), now known as Russia, acted with hesitation, whereas the Americans and Belgians were more forthright, giving the impression that they sided with Lumumba and his supporters. No one, including the UN, emerged from this imbroglio unscathed, especially as the equation became complicated by the two mining provinces that proclaimed independence: Katanga, led by Moïse Tshombe, and South Kasai, led by Albert Kalonji, who proclaimed himself "Mulopwe", the

only Baluba emperor. Despite being invited by Lumumba, the United Nations did not prioritise Lumumba's fight against the independent provinces of Katanga and Sud-Kasai to preserve the unity of the Congo and prevent its Balkanisation, and seemed to become embroiled in the situation, with its Secretary-General, the Swede Dag Hammarskjöld, having his own Congolese economic agenda. Not to mention the other Western countries — France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America — angry with Hammarskjöld for supporting the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. John F. Kennedy's election as the US President in November 1960 also shook up the geopolitical landscape, as the interests of the Dag Hammarskjöld and Kennedy families in Congolese copper businesses converged in Katanga. The Congo crisis became, in fact, the world's one.

The Congo crisis: another puzzle...

In summary, the Congolese crisis, which stretched from June 1960 to November 1965, was marked by several episodes, players, unknowns, tragedies and dramas, such as the assassinations of Patrice Lumumba, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, the death of the UN Secretary-General and all his collaborators in a plane crash on September 18, 1961 near Ndola airport in Zambia *en route* for the end of Congo conflict negotiation with Tshombe self-proclaimed President of Katanga, the UN diplomat who also had his hands on that *Congo Inc.* as his young brother, a copper trader, leered dealing with Tshombe, and inter-tribal wars and conflicts that claimed millions of lives, insurrections and rebellions characterised by their ills, blunders and illusions of democracy and independence. Everyone wanted a piece of the Congolese cake: France supported Katanga's independence through its protégé in the region, and General de Gaulle's protégé, Brazzaville's President Father Fulbert Youlou, a former

Catholic priest, sacked but always dressed in his cassocks, some stitched by luxury fashion houses in Paris. Even French planes bound for Katanga's rebellion passed through Brazzaville, where Fulbert Youlou paid official visits to Moïse Tshombe, who was also officially welcomed in Brazzaville as a chief of State. Not to mention the Congolese themselves, who needed money to become *'black-skinned whites'*, to travel, to send their children to study abroad and to resolve their clan and tribal poverty problems. It was a real fool's bargain that the United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld once summed up: *'My God! This is the craziest operation in history! Nobody can predict its outcome'*. The tragedy of the Congo crisis was the deaths of its main actors, sometimes in tragic circumstances: Patrice Emery Lumumba, Dag Hammarskjöld, Moïse Tshombe, kidnapped and died in Algiers on 29 June 1969; and President Joseph Kasavubu was finally ousted from power in 1965 by Colonel Mobutu and died on 24 March 1969.



Why does Congolese history seem to feature characters who transcend time? Patrice Lumumba?

During challenging historical periods when it seems as if the Congo is at a standstill, Lumumba's character emerges. He embodies an independent Congo. Of all his Congolese political contemporaries, Lumumba was the only one with a real vision for a united and independent Congo. He based his political system on nationalism, undoubtedly influenced by his travels to Accra, Ibadan, Conakry and Brussels before independence, and his encounters with visionaries such as Nkrumah (Ghana) and Sékou Touré (Guinea), as well as other independence leaders of the 1960s. Above all, he had a natural ability to lead, and he was open to learning, reading and engaging with others. According to Professor Jean Omasombo Tshonda, one of Lumumba's foremost biographers, the problem in the Congo since Lumumba's assassination is that it remains a

'space-state' in the model of Leopold II, where everything belongs to the leader and his supporters. Lumumba's vision for the Congo, which would have given the Congolese control of their own country, has never been realised. This is why Lumumba stands out as the Congo's national hero with an incredible ability to mobilise people and deliver speeches that none of his colleagues could match. He travelled around the world meeting African leaders whom none of his colleagues had encountered, and all of this in a short time, as if he knew his fate was short and had to engage in a race against time.

And Lumumba was the Congo's first elected prime minister.

Perpetrated by Belgians and Americans who confessed their plans, such as that professional killer the CIA dispatched with a poison to Patrice Lumumba's toothpaste, but that the CIA director in Leopoldville, Larry Devlin, found the method un-American, probably confident that his Congolese informants would carry out the task, Patrice Lumumba's assassination with Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, which has caused the shockwaves to continue to be felt in the Congo, effectively destroyed Congolese democracy.

What role do this tragedy and the name Lumumba play in the history of the Congo?

The tragic assassinations of Patrice Lumumba, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito impacted Congolese history. It was what Aimé Césaire's play portrayed as '*Une saison au Congo*' (A Season in the Congo). Following Lumumba's assassination, the Cold War front line in Africa suddenly became a reality. Lumumba is a cornerstone of contemporary Congolese history. A self-made man with innate leadership qualities, he was a true tribune who was talkative, direct and to the point. He had a clear vision for an independent Congo where the Congolese would be respected and respectable in a united country. Above all, he was a nationalist and a Pan-Africanist. Anyone who met him was almost left in awe of him. Following their meetings in New York in August 1960, the United Nations Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld, noticed the clarity of Patrice Lumumba's words, different from the tabloid and media clichés. At the US State Secretariat, they noted that he was not a man to be tamed; he looked left and right as if he were an alien. Together with the Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba dreamed of and planned for the *United States of Africa* to have one capital, army and currency. Like all heroes, Patrice Lumumba had a short public life: he was elected prime minister in June 1960 and served for just

two months before being assassinated six months later. His assassination plunged the Congo into a democratic crisis, as he was a democratically elected leader. Perhaps the Congo's ongoing misery stems from the absence of truly democratically elected leaders.

What kind of person was Patrice Emery Lumumba?

According to his friend and disciple, Professor Thomas Kanza, Lumumba is for the Congo what Fidel Castro is to Cuba, Lenin to Russia, Nkrumah to Ghana, Sékou Touré to Guinea and Nasser to Egypt. Let's also include Nelson Mandela in that list for South Africa. Falsely accused of being a communist, Lumumba's tragedy unfolded during the Cold War is reminiscent of Jean de La Fontaine's fable *'The Animals Sick with the Plague'*, in which the poor donkey is condemned for the mortal sin of *'eating other people's grass'*, while the lion, who confesses to eating the sheep and even the shepherd, is forgiven. Despite his good intentions to prove that he was neither anti-Belgian nor anti-white, Lumumba's fate was sealed; the decision had already been made that he must be eliminated. The Congo is still suffering from that assassination. What is unbelievable about the assassination of Lumumba is the ramifications of the conspiracy, the amount of money budgeted, millions of dollars of corruption. For an unarmed Lumumba... He and his allies, the Lumumbists, became disillusioned with the UN and stopped believing in the goodwill of the international community. Until now? Lumumba was certainly neither a saint nor a politically correct leader. He had a vision for the Congo. To him, politics and politicians meant serving and sacrificing for the people. A Congolese proverb says that *if you get lost in the forest, you must return to the crossroads to replan your way*. And so it is with Lumumba's assassination. Congo must revisit its history, analyse what went wrong, and learn from past mistakes. The assassination of Lumumba is a complex puzzle involving an incredible web of actors, plans, theories, trial and error, hesitation, underhanded tactics, tribal score-settling, self-enrichment, jealousy and clandestine manoeuvres. It continues to haunt the history of the DRC. He was a democratically elected prime minister, an independence fighter, a nationalist and a man with a vision of a united, cross-cultural Congo. He was also one of those African leaders who dreamed of a unified Africa. The Congo today suffers from the absence of a leader to embody Lumumba's vision. The assassination of Lumumba proved the Congo to be on the Cold War frontline, with

known and unknown actors and visible and invisible consequences. Congo's resources and strategic minerals made it a battlefield with shadow-operating actors and Congolese puppets akin to a puppet theatre.

What was the global reaction to Lumumba's death?

Following his assassination, Lumumba became a meteoric figure, a leader without borders, a demiurge. Avenues, monuments, squares and universities were named after him. Large-scale demonstrations, rebellions and insurrections broke out around the world in protest at such an injustice. In New York, the UN held several days of debates, during which Secretary-General Hammarskjöld was accused of failing to assist someone in danger. World leaders, including Fidel Castro, Malcolm X and Che Guevara, commemorated Lumumba's legacy and condemned his assassination. In 1961, the USSR's Peoples' Friendship University, founded in 1960, also known as RUDN University and until 1992 and after March 2023, was renamed to the Patrice Lumumba Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. The university was established to provide education to students from developing countries, particularly those emerging from colonial rule and offering scholarships to many Africans. For Africans, Black people and Congolese people, Lumumba's assassination was an eye-opener, demonstrating that the former colonialists were not sincere and were playing their covert games. After all, Lumumba was an elected leader, and his assassination reminds us that Westerners did not believe in or support the democracy they had championed, especially since the elections he won were organised by the Belgians, who were not his supporters. Africans reflect on such tragedies as the humiliating arrest and transfer of Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, the assassinations of Cameroonian leader Ruben Um Nyobé and Togo's first president Sylvanus Olympio, and even the recent assassination of Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi. Patrice Emery Lumumba's victory proved that Africans and Congolese could carry out democratic, free and fair elections! However, Lumumba's assassination also marked the end of democracy in the DRC⁷¹. Throughout his speeches and political

⁷¹ In his opening statement to the ICC, Laurent Gbagbo told the court that he had fought all his life for democracy in Côte d'Ivoire, since the times of single-party rule when no one thought the Berlin Wall would ever fall. He added that Africans embrace democracy, not because the West imposes it on them,

practices, Lumumba demonstrated that he was a Congolese patriot who championed national unity and rejected tribalism. He formed a national coalition government and had close associates from various regions, including Mobutu from Equateur, Antoine Gizenga, Mulele and Mpolo from Bandundu, Kashamura from Kivu, Nzuzi from Kasai, Sendwe from Katanga, and, instead of backing for the presidency, Jean Bolikango, from the same Anamongo ethnic group with him, he decided to choose Joseph Kasa-Vubu, a Mukongo, to save the country's unity as Bakongo and ABAKO had the majority of the population of Leopoldville, the capital. Although he was from Sankuru himself, his electoral stronghold was Stanleyville, far from his native region. It was this Lumumbist legacy that his trusted confidant, Mobutu, copied during his thirty-two years in power after betraying him. Every decade or so, Africa celebrates Lumumba. In the well-known song '*Lombonga*'⁷² (meaning 'Revolution' in Lingala), Max Mongali sings about him: "*Yeh Lombonga eh-eh, Lombonga ah eh-eh, ba mama bakolela !/Baboti ngai moindo na Congo monene, nakoli na kati ya bapaya, nalelaki ah*

but because it is a necessity for Africa's fragile states, where each ethnic group and tribe has its own political system; only democracy helps living together.

⁷² "*Revolution! Mothers keep crying. I was born black in the great Congo; I grew up under colonisation and kept crying bitter tears. The sun rises for every citizen of the world. Mbula Matari, the coloniser, did everything he could to block my thoughts and thwart my rebellion in the dark. They pillaged, lied, stole and raped black people, luckily that Lumumba rose up and lit a fire on the river! They thought they had silenced Black people, submerging them in deep waters, but Lumumba's death lit a lamp; a light that now illuminates the world, exposing all. Massamba Débat, Sékou Touré, and Nasser, where are Ben Bella and Nkrumah? Let us mourn Boganda, whom we miss! From Mozambique to Angola, passing through Rhodesia and South Africa, God in heaven, this Africa is being violated! Angola is burning, and Mozambique is crying. Sons of Africa, let us sympathise with and support the struggles of others! Leaders of revolutions, where are Mao and Ho Chi Minh? Let us sing for the revolution! Bolivia, Guatemala, Venezuela, Uruguay and Vietnam: you are the leaders of the guerrillas; we are confident, we will win the fight!*" (JP Buse, *Lombonga/Revolution*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2t1adIk1IA&list=RDe2t1adIk1IA&start_radio=1; Max Mongali, *Lombonga* : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnGdU9zbC5I&list=RDLnGdU9zbC5I&start_radio=1).

mama !/Ntongo etanaka mpo ya moto nyoso ya mokili, Mbula matari akangisi mayele na nga na molili !/Bayibaki eh, bakosaki bayindo, Lumumba ateleme, atumbi moto na ebale !/Babanzaki bazindisi bayindo, liwa ya Lumumba epelisi mwinda na mokili. (...) Mas-samba Débat eh, Sékou Touré na Nasser, wapi Ben Bella na Nkrumah, Tolela Boganda ah !/Uta na Mozambique, Angola kin'o Rhodésie, Sud Afrika, Nzambe oh, Afrika ya kotimola/Angola ekozika eh, Mozambique ekobelesa ah, bana y'Afrika nyonso tolela baninga, a Nzambe !/Mao na Ho Chi Minh bilombe ya révolution, wapi Guevara na Malcolm, toyemba Lombonga ah !/Bolivie na Guatemala, Venezuela na Uruguay, Vietnam, bilombe ya guérilla, nde bolongi etumba ! Yeh Lombonga eh-eh, Lombonga ah eh-eh, ba mama bakolela !". Every contemporary African leader claims to be in the footsteps of Patrice Lumumba and to continue his fight: Sankara, Jerry Rawlings, Ibrahim Traoré and Laurent Gbagbo, etc.

Are there some facts about his last days?

Having been locked up in Thysville prison, he made one last attempt to send a letter to the UN Secretary-General, Hammarskjöld, who was visiting Leopoldville. But Lumumba learned that the latter was undoubtedly angry and did not take it. The same international diplomat had told Thomas Kanza before: *'Lumumba is playing with fire'*. Lumumba understood that his days were numbered. During his final telephone conversation with Thomas Kanza, who was trying to dissuade him from leaving his residence in Leopoldville, where he was under the protection of peacekeepers, Lumumba said: *'Thomas, someone must pay with their blood for the Congo.'* He also wrote a letter to his wife, Pauline, proclaiming his faith in a better Congo and recalling that one day Africa would write its own history and also a few lines about his children, whom he would never see again. He had planned to send them to Egypt, where President Nasser welcomed them. This last letter to Pauline is Lumumba's political testament. After Lumumba's assassination, his friend, the Belgian Van Lierde, edited all his speeches, writings and texts into a volume: *'Lumumba speaks.'* Lumumba also wrote a book published afterwards: *'Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé'* (Congo, land of the future, is under threat).

Ireland and DR Congo's shared history

Is there a shared history between the DRC and Ireland?

His Majesty's first Consul to the Congo, the Irishman **Roger Casement**, brought Leopold II to his knees. Casement also proposed to the hesitant Morel to establish the **Congo Reform Association**, which he sponsored with an initial donation of 100 shillings. During the Congolese 1960s crisis, which surrounded Lumumba's assassination on 17 January 1961 and the dispatch of UN peacekeepers at Lumumba's request, however, once on the ground in the Congo, these peacekeepers were far from aligned with Lumumba, who had invited them. **Conor Cruise O'Brien**, an independent and anti-colonialist Irishman and the UN Secretary-General's representative in Katanga, campaigned for the Congo's total independence and worked to end Katanga's secession by Moïse Tshombe. Consequently, the Katangese were averse to him, and his boss, the UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, made a mistake by not allowing O'Brien to accompany him in his negotiations with Tshombe. Disaster struck when the UN plane crashed in Ndola, Zambia, where the meeting was due to take place. O'Brien quickly stated that Katangese mercenaries had shot down the Secretary-General's aircraft, but nobody believed him. This is now widely accepted. He subsequently resigned from the UN.

The Irish Blue Helmets in the Congo experienced difficult times.

The Congolese crisis of 1960–61 prompted Ireland to send soldiers to join the UN peacekeeping mission in the Congo. Their archives are kept at the IUNVA House, the headquarters of the Irish United Nations Veterans Association, on Mount Temple Road in Dublin 7. The Irish peacekeepers experienced two tragic incidents in the Congo: the ambush at Katanga Niemba and the siege of Jadotville. Despite Tshombe's secession of Katanga, Jason Sendwe, a pro-Lumumba leader from the Balubakat party whose stronghold was in northern Katanga around Manono and the port of Albertville (now Kalemie), refused Moses Tshombe's leadership and that of his mercenaries. The mercenaries bombarded and attacked Niemba from 4 October 1960 onwards, causing the local Baluba population to become wary of anyone resembling the mercenaries. Upon arrival, the Irish dispatched a contingent to protect the local population and urged them not to abandon their villages. This prevented the secession from spreading across Katanga province. On 8 November, eleven soldiers from the 33rd Irish Battalion arrived in Niemba via the bridge over the Luweyeye River when they came face-to-

face with a hundred Baluba armed with poisoned arrows, spears, machetes, etc. Having spotted the soldiers, Irish Lieutenant Kevin Gleeson (the battalion commander) and Sergeant Gaynor went forward to speak to the Baluba amicably. Unfortunately, the Baluba mistook them for Tshombe's mercenaries and began to beat them up seriously. Seeing their comrades being beaten, the rest of the troops took up positions behind giant trees and fired at the advancing Baluba at point-blank range, despite many of them falling victim to Irish bullets. Overall, the battle claimed the lives of nine Irish soldiers and 25 Baluba. As these soldiers were on their first United Nations operation, their bodies returned to Ireland for an official funeral caused a great stir. Since then, Irish opinion has associated the Baluba with cannibals and barbarians, as reports emerged of them mutilating and eating the hearts of soldiers.

What about the renowned “Siege of Jadotville”?

The '*Siege of Jadotville*', in the Katanga city of Likasi, took place from 13 to 17 September 1961. Despite negative press coverage at the time, those Irish United Nations Blue Helmets who served in Congo deserve praise for their courage and professionalism on the battlefield.

How did it happen?

As the UN failed to impose a ceasefire and Katanga continued to recruit mercenaries, they decided to use force. The atmosphere in Katanga became toxic as the first UN operation was a disaster: Blue Helmets were responsible for Congolese civilian deaths. Then, 3,000 Katangese soldiers and their white mercenaries attacked the 155 peacekeepers of the 25th Irish Infantry Battalion Company, who had just arrived in the mining town of Jadotville, 100 kilometres from Elisabethville. The Irish soldiers, who lacked experience in African terrain and wore uniforms ill-suited to the tropical climate, were commanded by Major Patrick J. Quinlan. With Swedish Second Lieutenant L. Fröberg serving as an interpreter, Quinlan refrained from taking the initiative in any attack as the soldiers only had light weapons. On 9 September 1961, they were surprised to find that the Katangese and their mercenaries had blocked all the town's exit roads. As a precaution against an attack, the Irish soldiers dug trenches around their barracks. On the 11th, the Irish commander met with the town mayor and Katangese officers to explain their

peacekeeping mission and clear up any misunderstandings. Curiously, the Katangese attacked them with a heavy gun on the 13th⁷³.

What was the reaction of the Irish Blue Helmets at the time?

With no other option, they took up their positions in the trenches and fought back. They radioed for ONUC reinforcements from Elisabethville, but they never arrived. The Irish fought until their last bullet, resulting in 150 Katangese casualties and no Irish fatalities or injuries. To save his men, Major Quinlan had no choice but to raise the white flag on the 16th and sign the surrender agreement with Godefroid Munongo, Moses Tshombe's interior minister, on the 17th. On 25 October, Elisabethville freed the Irish in exchange for the Katangese prisoners. Regrettably, upon their return to Dublin, the Irish did not receive any honours as they were considered cowards, despite their valiant and life-saving efforts. Richie Smith's film *'The Siege of Jadotville'* restored their reputation and recognised their bravery.

The UK in the Congolese crisis...

Lumumba also set foot in the UK.

This occurred while the Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba was travelling to and from the United States of America. On 23 July 1960, the Ghanaian government loaned him a plane, and he travelled via Accra and London and held talks with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, John Profumo, and other leading British figures during a five-hour stopover at Heathrow Airport on the evening of the 23rd July. He arrived in New York on 24 July with a delegation of sixteen people. On his return journey, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba stopped again at London Heathrow airport on 2 August 1960. During his six-hour layover, he met the Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign Office, Archibald Ross, as well as the ambassadors of Tunisia, Ghana, Morocco and Ethiopia.

Was the UK involved in the Congo crisis?

Yes. During the years of the Congo crisis, which culminated in Lumumba's assassination, the UK opened its embassy in Leopoldville and dispatched its renowned spy and MI6 director, Daphne

⁷³ Smith, R., *The Siege of Jadotville* (2016, Ireland); the archives at the Irish United Nations Veterans Association IUNVA House, Mount Temple Road, Dublin. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/we-literally-would-all-have-died-in-jad> [Acc. 17, 2018]

Park. According to Labour Lord David Lea, Miss Park Daphne, a famous secret agent based in Leopoldville between 1959 and 1961, revealed this UK involvement: *'I mentioned the controversy surrounding the abduction and murder of Lumumba and the theory that MI6 may have played a role'*. *'Indeed,'* she replied. In Leopoldville, Daphne disguised herself as a missionary and lived in Limete, an area where diplomats were not permitted to reside; they were required to live in Kalina (Gombe) instead. She also drove a modest Citroën 2CV, which attracted the attention of Congolese politicians. She first met Lumumba in the British Embassy and subsequently interacted with him frequently. When she first visited Stanleyville, Lumumba asked his allies, especially the president of his MNC youth party, Bernard Salumu, to help her. She also gained extensive knowledge about Lumumba when she recruited Damien Kandolo, his cabinet director.

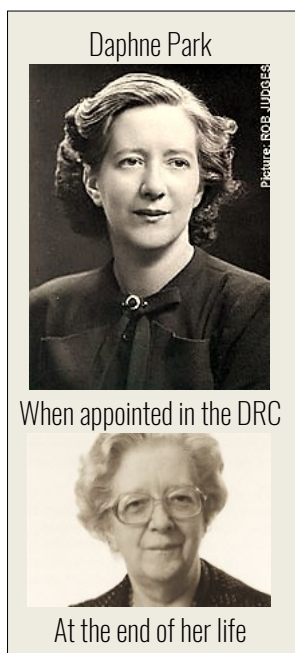
Who was Damien Kandolo, and what role did he ultimately play in Lumumba's assassination?

Damien Kandolo, who was not only Lumumba's cabinet director but also his tribal brother, was one of Lumumba's protégés and had his complete confidence. Unfortunately, Kandolo caused Lumumba considerable harm. The dead are dead, alas. Park recruited Kandolo as a secret agent, and he also worked for the CIA. He stole secret documents from the Prime Minister's office and handed them over to the CIA and MI6. He even fabricated false Russian associates, advisers and documents from Lumumba's cabinet that implicated Lumumba in contact with the Russians. An episode. When Lumumba's associates finally discovered Kandolo's treachery, Park claimed that Lumumba had ordered his arrest. He was beaten to death and placed in a vehicle bound for an unknown destination. However, due to the drunkenness of the driver and the escorts, the car crashed. Kandolo, who was suffering from a broken arm, fled to a dispensary, where he contacted Park. Park then managed to escape with Kandolo's wife and children to Brazzaville. Kandolo continued to inform Park, particularly regarding Madame Blouin, Gizenga's female advisor, Mulele's friend and Lumumba's chief of protocol. At that time, Leopoldville was full of spies and secret service agents, and spying became a well-paid job for most of the Congolese, as some politicians also became spies to receive easy money. Among these CIA and

other secret service spies, the closest friends living in the same area were *'le Groupe de Binza'* (the Binza Boys): Joseph Mobutu, who became president in 1965; Justin-Marie Bomboko, Lumumba's former foreign minister who betrayed him; Victor Nendaka, a former Lumumba ally who became head of national security and played a key role in Lumumba's assassination; and Albert Ndele, the future governor of the central bank, who hated Patrice Lumumba.

What possible interest could the British have in the Congo? Have they missed any opportunities they might come to regret?

Probably. Sir H. M. Stanley dreamed of British investment in the Congo, which he was the first to explore, particularly the Congo River. He campaigned among the British Chambers of Commerce, appealing for investment in the Congo. London was uninterested, preferring to rely on Cecil Rhodes' colonial project to offer Africa from Cairo to Cape Town to the British. Leopold II seized the opportunity and hired Stanley. As soon as



the Congo started being exploited, British capital was put to work. The Congolese rubber exploitation, which we are all too familiar with, benefited the Dunlop tyre factories in Belfast and Dublin. To exploit the Congo, Leopold II turned to Liverpool shipping companies to link Antwerp to the Congo. To expand its factories, the British company Unilever turned to Leopold II's Congo to exploit the Congolese forests for palm oil. Using a soap-making process invented by chemist William Hough Watson, who replaced animal fat with vegetable oil, the Lever Brothers soap company contracted with Leopold II in 1911, who offered them land on which to produce palm oil. In 1929, the company merged with the Dutch margarine producer Margarine Unie to form Unilever, one

of the businesses that shaped the 20th century. Lever's name was given to Leverville, now Lusanga, Unilever's headquarters in the Congo, a replica of the English village of Port Sunlight. When he

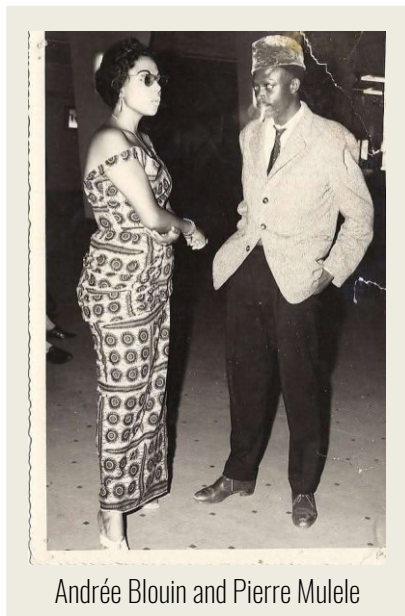
arrived in Congo in 1935, Jesuit Father Jean Comeliau set up a library and the first Congolese publishing house in Leverville in 1943. These published slim volumes by Congolese authors and general knowledge books: *La Bibliothèque de l'Étoile*. They later moved to the CEPAS Jesuit centre in the capital city, Kinshasa.

Andrée Blouin: an Iron Lady before her time

Who was Andree Blouin, always mentioned in Lumumba's archives and files?

The film, *'Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat'*, brings it all back into focus. She played several roles, including facilitating talks between Congo Brazzaville's political opponents at the time of independence. She was Lumumba's chief of staff. While she was at Lumumba's side, she was expelled from the Congo four days before independence. On her way up from Rome to Conakry, she revealed the agreement signed the day before she left Leopoldville, in which Lumumba and Congolese politicians agreed to form a government led by Lumumba. This forced Belgium to appoint Lumumba to form the first government, and she was quickly exfiltrated by an Eastern European embassy from Rome to Conakry via Paris. Unfortunately, she was expelled for the second time a month before Lumumba's assassination and died in Paris. Blouin was a resilient woman and an early feminist, often referred to as an 'iron lady'. One striking feature of the Lumumba years was the absence of women in politics. The first Congolese woman to become involved in politics was Sophie Lihau Kanza, who was appointed Minister of Social Affairs by Mobutu in 1967. Born in the Central African Republic to a white father and a black mother, Blouin studied in Brazzaville and lived in the DRC, at Dima, near Bandundu, where she lived with a white man with whom she had her first daughter. She spoke Lingala, Kikongo and French, lived in Guinea and absorbed Sekou Touré's Pan-Africanism, independence and anti-colonial ideology. She met Kwame Nkrumah, who advised her to set up a Pan-African women's movement, which she did. After meeting Pierre Mulele and Antoine Gizenga in Conakry, they invited her to Congo to campaign for their party, the Parti Solidaire Africain (PSA). During the May 1960 elections, she actively campaigned and engaged women and girls in politics for the first time in Leopoldville province, thereby gaining popularity and demonstrating a strong anti-colonialist stance. She was the first

woman to mobilise Congolese women and girls to participate in politics, vote, speak out publicly and stand up for their rights. She drafted PSA speeches and played a key role in the PSA's success as the second party after Lumumba's MNC. The Belgians, Americans and British called her every name in the book. The Belgians,



Andrée Blouin and Pierre Mulele

Americans and British called her every name under the sun. Following Lumumba's arrest and assassination, the CIA ordered her expulsion. Since then, she has narrowly avoided several attacks and assassination attempts during her exile in Europe. In 1983, she published an autobiography in English: *My Country, Africa: Autobiography of a Black Pasionaria*. Born in 1921, she died in Paris in 1986. André Blouin should be celebrated alongside other heroines, such as Léonie Abo, who provided invaluable testimony about Mulele's revo-

lution/rebellion.

How did the country fare after Lumumba's death, and what brought the long Congolese crisis to an end?

The announcement of Lumumba's assassination plunged the Congo into Lumumbist rebellions that embraced Marxist ideology. These rebels, who called themselves 'Simba' (meaning 'lion' in Swahili), adopted the battle cry 'Mulele-Mai', named after Lumumba's former education minister Pierre Mulele, who had been trained in the USSR and China, the leader of the west of Congo's branch rebellion he sparked as a popular peasant insurrection, complete with training and a whole revolutionary catechism launched in Kwilu in 1964. With the Lumumbists and secessionists controlling half the country, the central government of President Kasavubu in Leopoldville, along with Congo's Belgian and American sponsors, decided to form a government of national unity to unite the country. Following the initial failure of the Coquilhatville (now

Mbandaka) conclave from 24 April to 28 May 1961, the Lovanium conclave from 22 July to 2 August 1961 produced a government of national unity led by Prime Minister Cyrille Adoula. He offered posts to the Stanleyville Lumumbists, including Antoine Gizenga as his deputy, as well as arranging for General Lundula to return to Leopoldville. A brief period of calm ensued, but the return of the Lumumbist rebellion to Stanleyville plunged the country back into civil war before the rebels were driven out. Excluded from political life in Leopoldville — the CIA, in particular, did not want them on the political scene — these Lumumbists crossed the river to Brazzaville. There, a Marxist named Massamba Debat had just taken power in 1963, overthrowing the first president, Fulbert Youlou, who was also a monk. From there, they formed two rebellion fronts: one to the west with Pierre Mulele, and the other to the east of Stanleyville with Christophe Gbenye, Lumumba's former Minister of the Interior⁷⁴ and named 'Simba', lion in Swahili, witch battle cry was 'Mulele-Mai', and one of the leaders at the Fizi-Baraka area was Laurent-Désiré Kabila. And, the independent provinces of Katanga and Kasai refused to be reconnected with Leopoldville. After the death of the UN Secretary-General, the UN imposed peace and an end to Katanga and South Kasai independence with the 'U Thant plan': Moise Tshombe and Albert Kalonji went into exile. Only the Lumumbists continued to fight. Che Guevara even visited the eastern front, but quickly gave up when he realised that Laurent-Désiré Kabila's men in Fizi-Baraka were not real revolutionaries. This prompted the Belgians to devise a plan to end the crisis: they reinstated Moise Tshombe as Prime Minister in 1964, while the country adopted a new constitution drafted by Congolese in Luluabourg and organised elections. Popular Moise Tshombe went to Belgium and renegotiated the poorly negotiated Congolese portfolio during independence. He

⁷⁴ All the rebellions in eastern Congo adopted '*Mulele-Mai*' as their battle cry, because of the belief in fetish practices that enemy bullets turn into water when they hit them and, also believing in these fetishes, the national army soldiers would dread the arrival of these "Simba" rebels, shouting and stuffing fetishes. It took Colonel Mobutu's courage at the battle of Kamanyola in 1964 to show that machine guns could kill these rebels and, above all, to stop their fetishists and priestesses, Onema of the Batetela tribe in the north of the country. Also, other new African rebellions (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Madagascar in the 1960s, the now DRC's Mai-Mai and Wazalendo) use and believe in those fetish practices. According to Mulele's wife, Abo, Mulele never use fetiches and emphasised trainings.

returned with millions that Belgium repaid to the Congo, although the Belgians tricked him by paying only a fraction of what the Congo was owed. Tshombe gained a reputation for restoring the national coffers and using that money to improve Congolese lives. This financial generosity earned him the nickname ‘Mr Drawer-Cash’ (Monsieur Tiroir-Caisse).

What was Tshombe’s strategy for ending the rebellions?

Colonel Joseph-Desire Mobutu and Moses Tshombe rehired their mercenaries and decided to wipe out the Lumumbist rebellion. A large-scale operation named ‘Ommegang’ was organised from Kamina in Katanga to drive the rebels out of Stanleyville, led by the Belgian Colonel Vandewalle and mercenaries such as the French Bob Denard, the Belgian Jean Schramme, and the British Thomas Michael “Mad Mike” Hora. The Belgian ‘Operation Dragon’ involved parachuting into Stanleyville to liberate the city and the hostages held by the Lumumbists, including Christophe Gbenye, former Home Office minister under Patrice Lumumba. The Lumumbists were defeated, and their President, Christophe Gbenye, escaped into exile.

What about the foreign dignitaries at the bedside of these Congolese leaders?

Another obstacle during those years of independence was the fact that foreigners, particularly secret services such as the Belgian and American CIA, were aware of the Congo’s place in international geopolitics and took it hostage. Each leader was surrounded by foreign advisors who controlled them and served the interests of their own countries, which also paid them. This led to a real ‘Tower of Babel’ crisis. The three most prominent leaders — President Joseph Kasa-Vubu, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, and Moses Tshombe, the president of Katanga province — formed a *‘fatal triumvirate’*: they never worked together for the Congo. Joseph Kasa-Vubu, the calm man supported by the Catholics, had the confidence of the Westerners. Moses Tshombe and his Katanga had the financiers behind them. Finally, Patrice Lumumba was the most popular man and the elected leader. According to Thomas Kanza, who witnessed this period first-hand, three pools of neo- or post-colonial influence became the epicentre of any decision about the Congo: *Brussels* (the former metropolis that controlled the international affairs of the Congo due to its historical expertise, but whose decisions were always influenced by its own internal conflicts, changes,

and political elections), *Washington* (the best Belgian ally for managing the Congolese situation, particularly about investment and control over mining exploitation), and *Paris* (which has always dreamed of exercising its right of first refusal over the Congo, granted by Leopold II in 1885 to placate France into allowing him to take control of the Congo. If he were no longer able to manage the Congo, it would be handed over to France, which had never approved the transfer of the Congo to Belgium in 1908. Above all, the Congo is the largest French-speaking country in the world. To these three must be added *London*, which acts as a bridge between the first two and probably still regrets failing to make the Congo its colony after Stanley's trans-African journey. Because of the Democratic Republic of Congo's geostrategic position, Russia, China and France also have their sights on it, not forgetting the rise of new worldwide forces and powers: Turkey, Brazil, Canada, etc.

What did Tshombe do?

As previously mentioned, Moses Tshombe and Colonel Joseph Mobutu finally drove the Lumumbists out of Stanleyville in 1964 with the help of Belgian paratroopers and CIA agents. Moses Tshombe's mercenaries had come to support Colonel Mobutu's army, and he had become a powerful figure. Tshombe became popular and stabilised the country, especially after his first official journey in Belgium, where he returned saying he had fixed the post-colonial Belgo-Congolese litigation that ensued, resulting in the return of the portfolio that the Belgians had taken with them after independence, which amounted to millions of Belgian francs for the Congolese treasury. And, with his new political CONACO coalition, Tshombe led the 1965 elections held under the new 1964 (Lulua-bourg) constitution, which changed the name of the country to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a federal regime, adopted the blue flag with a red diagonal band framed by two diagonal lines and a yellow star at the top left corner. As the election of the head of state was also to be decided by the electorate, Tshombe was sure to win as a candidate.

Could this be yet another inexplicable error made by President Joseph Kasa-Vubu?

Then, President Joseph Kasa-Vubu made a second fatal Congolese historical mistake, after the one to remove Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba from power on 5th September 1960: he disregarded the election results and, instead of Tshombe, who had the constitutional

majority, appointed Evariste Kimba, Moses Tshombe's former minister when they were in Katanga, as the new Prime Minister. Unfortunately, Evariste Kimba twice failed to win parliamentary approval as the Prime Minister.

The Congo again launched a new crisis...

This new crisis opened the door to Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu's coup: in the name of the Army, he ousted President Joseph Kasa-Vubu from power on 24 November 1965. A CIA and Belgian Sûreté agent, Mobutu held the Congo prisoner for 32 years before shamefully removing him without acknowledging his loyal service. Mobutu appointed General Léonard Mulamba as prime minister. As he had no political allies, Mobutu and Mulamba recruited their ministers from the parliament, which had backed his coup: Etienne Tshisekedi, Nsinga Udjuu, Paul Mushiete, etc. Moise Tshombe left for a new exile in Spain, and Joseph Kasa-Vubu returned to his village, where he died years later.

Mobutu's dictatorship

To assert his power, Mobutu began his regime with tyranny, arresting former ministers Jérôme Anany and Alexandre Mahamba, as well as Senator Emmanuel Bamba. He also nominated Prime Minister Evarist Kimba. They were all accused of conspiring against Mobutu. They were hanged on 2 June 1966 at the site of today's Martyrs' Stadium in Kinshasa. Meanwhile, the Lumumbists kept a low profile: Laurent-Désire Kabila went into exile in Dar es Salaam, Gaston Soumialot in Bujumbura, and Pierre Mulele was assassinated on 3 October 1968. Mobutu had assured Pierre Mulele that he would be granted amnesty and be able to return safely to Congo, but this agreement was never honoured. Moise Tshombe, who was probably preparing to organise a coup against Joseph Mobutu, died on 29 June 1969 in his prison house in Algiers. He had previously been kidnapped from his exile in Spain in bizarre circumstances. A new page in Congolese history had been turned, and it would not be the last.

Africa: 1970s-1980s and Mobutu's MPR "Parti-Etat"

How could the DRC, formerly Zaire, and the rest of Africa be described during those post-independence years?

It was a period of disillusionment, as the Ivoirian writer Ahmadou Kourouma highlighted in his novel *'Les soleils des indépendances'*

(The Suns of Independence), in which he criticises the fact that independence did not benefit Africans equally, instead bringing about single-party rule and the national boubou. In terms of launching a new Africa where citizens benefited from the state, independence had disappointed and failed miserably. It only brought the politician, the new African sorcerer. From 1960 to 1970, independent African countries were led by the *'Independence Fathers'*, who primarily fought against neo-colonialism and were fighting the former colonisers' desire to maintain control of Africa by using their proxy-leaders and less pro-independence presidents, such as the presidents of Gabon and the Ivory Coast, Léon Mba and Houphouët-Boigny, respectively. Meanwhile, the most pro-independence leaders — including Modibo Keita of Mali, Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana — turned to the USSR, Portugal's former colonies remained under Portuguese control, and South Africa lived under the anti-black apartheid regime officially established by the National Party in 1948. As a result, Africa became the front line of the Cold War, and all presidents who distanced themselves from the Western camp were overthrown in coups d'état. The first presidents to be overthrown were Togo's President Sylvanus Olympio in 1963, the Algerian Ahmed Ben Bella in 1965 by Colonel Houari Boumédiène, and Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. Sekou Touré resisted all such attempts until he died in 1984. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Africa was governed by military leaders and experienced the emergence of single-party systems copied from the USSR's communist party. Even countries that the West and the US backed finally adopted it as a symbol of stability against the post-independence years' racism and rebellions. Some of those regime changes were peaceful, while others were extremely violent. Until 2022, Africa experienced 214 coups d'état, 106 of which were successful, from the first coup in Africa in 1952, when King Farouk of Egypt was deposed by the military revolution and replaced by Gamal Abdel Nasser, who became president in 1954. Some deposed leaders, such as David Dacko of the Central African Republic and Denis Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of the Congo, returned to power. Sudan holds the record with 17 coups, six of which were successful; Burkina Faso has experienced eight coups, only one of which failed in 2015. And Nigeria, whose presidents had mostly attended major military academies, particularly in the United Kingdom, experienced eight coup attempts, six of which were successful. Nigeria became

stable after the death of the last dictator, Sani Abacha, in June 1998 and the transition under General Abdulsalami Abubakar, who initiated a new democratic process and organised free and fair elections won by the former president, Olusegun Obasanjo, who was sworn in as president in May 1999. Although the former Organisation of African Unity and now the African Union charter, and other regional organisations, condemn coups d'état, realpolitik compels them to accept them later.

Some examples.

These coups brought armed despots to power who remain negative heroes of contemporary African history. In Liberia, Sergeant Samuel Doe organised in 1980 one of the most macabre coups d'état, assassinating the entire government, most of whom were tied to posts and shot on the beach in Monrovia, the capital, including the president. As he who lives by the sword shall die by the sword, Doe was later arrested, tortured and assassinated in 1990 by the warlord Prince Johnson. In Ghana, Captain Jerry Rawlings initially handed power over to civilians after an attempted coup, but then seized it back for several more years. In Guinea-Conakry, General Lansana Conté took power after the death of Ahmed Sékou Touré, the Father of Independence, and launched the destruction of Sékou Touré's legacy. This led to the opening of the infamous Camp Boiro prison in the centre of Conakry, where Sékou Touré's opponents, both real and imagined, were tortured and often died as a result, such as the former AUO's Secretary General Diallo Telli. In Ethiopia, Mengistu Haile Mariam staged a revolutionary coup by killing Emperor Haile Selassie. In Congo-Brazzaville, Colonel Marien Ngouabi overthrew Massamba Débat, who withdrew before the first President, Fulbert Youlou. Marien Ngouabi was later also assassinated. In Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta), Captain Isidore Thomas Sankara became Head of State in 1983 after a coup organised by his friend, Captain Blaise Compaoré, who ironically overthrew him on 15 October 1987. Revolutionaries also seized power in Mali, Niger, Somalia, Burundi, and Rwanda. With the end of the Cold War in the 1990s, new constitutions enabled the militaries to relinquish their uniforms if they wished to pursue a political career. However, the movement started by these African reformers, including Thomas Sankara and Jerry Rawlings, was reignited in the early twenty-first century, taking advantage of the resurgence of a more assertive Russia and the missteps of the

Western bloc, such as the assassination of Muammar Gaddafi and the arrest and transfer of Ivorian President Laurent Gbagbo to the International Criminal Court, ICC. The ongoing conflicts in Ukraine, Israel/Palestine, and the Gaza Strip represent the pinnacle of this Eurocentric approach, exposing the double standards of a certain neo-colonial West that dismisses the Global South.

How did these African dictatorships come to an end?

During this period, Africa also witnessed rebellions led by ruthless ‘warlords’ and their mainly small soldiers, who used drugs and fetishes, deluding themselves into thinking they were invulnerable. The most barbaric of these were in Liberia (1989–2003) under Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson, and in Sierra Leone (1991–2002) under Foday Sankoh’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF) fighting for the control of diamond mining famously known for their war anthem ‘*short sleeves, long sleeves*’, the question those child soldiers were forced their unfortunate captives to choose themselves how they wanted their arm to be amputated. In Somalia, after the fall of the Marxist dictator Siad Barre in 1991, the country was plunged into civil war, led by Islamist groups and rebels once led by General Mohamed Farah Aïdid.

What about the DRC and its party, the MPR?

The DRC, then Zaïre, was ruled by Colonel Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, who seized power on 24 November 1965. He had stabilised the country for five years, and ended the 1960–1965 rebellions, which followed the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, notably after the assassination of Lumumba’s follower Pierre Mulele in 1968, the last of them. With the blessing of the US and the West, Mobutu built up his power, making him the bulwark against communism in Central Africa. He became a dictator. Appetite comes with eating... The country became an oasis for Mobutu’s troubadours and thurifers as it sank into economic and financial hell. With the blessing of his Western protectors, Mobutu established a dictatorship modelled on the communist autocrats he had copied, and he became a bulwark against communism. He rehabilitated Lumumba’s name as a national hero and revived the economy by nationalising businesses and creating a new currency, the Zaire, in 1967. On 20 May 1967, he founded a new political party, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution (MPR)*, whose constitution, based on the American model, allowed the country to have political parties. However, Mobutu then backtracked, opting for a single party and abolishing political parties. He dismissed

all his former friends and became a dictator in the 1970s, concentrating all power in his own hands.

Was the MPR a well-organised party and political system?

The MPR's popular slogan was "*God rules in heaven and on earth; it is the MPR*". Mobutu quickly developed an appetite for power, especially as many of the post-independence countries in Africa were led by militaries who organised coups against civilian leaders. These leaders became friends, supporting each other. Mobutu swiftly eliminated all opposition, and the years between 1970 and 1990 saw an unchallenged Mobutu dictatorship. There was megalomania, confusion between the state coffers and Mobutu's private pockets, clientelism, and the formation of a clique of men and women in power who alternated in a game of appointments and reshuffles. The single-party MPR, as in other African countries, constituted itself as the real manager of the state, with budgetary party institutions such as the '*Bureau Politique*' and the '*Comité Central*', whose members were untouchable. These specialised party institutions included *MOPAP (Mobilisation et Propagande du Parti)*, which was responsible for events and other publicity activities. This included maintaining groups of entertainers who sang hymns in praise of Mobutu. All state structures were required to have such groups. The organisation of competitions and national gatherings in Kinshasa, as well as MPR congresses in N'Sele, a town on the outskirts of Kinshasa, were also the responsibility of MOPAP. Mobutu surrounded himself with troubadours and sycophants who deified him, and he arranged his supporters like pawns in a game of draughts, appointing, thanking, imprisoning and destabilising them with unprecedented Machiavellianism, taking no interest in the people or their suffering. He dug his own grave. We knew the end was coming, without knowing when or how, even though he believed himself to be eternal, as the songs said: '*Lokuta monene, oyo akanisaka, MPR ekokufa, waya!*', (It is a big illusion and lie if one believes that MPR will die! A big lie !); '*Mobutu mokako swa, cent ans tomotombe! Mpo na kosukisa, a vie!*' (May Mobutu rule forever! We wish him a hundred years in power! And forevermore!).

But was the country economically and financially stable?

With the collapse of copper prices and the global petrodollar crisis in the 1970s, Mobutu's Zaïre sank into an economic and financial abyss as a result of Mobutu's disastrous policies, such as

'Zairianisation', which involved seizing private businesses distributed to MPR members who had no idea how to run them. It marked the beginning of Zaire's collapse, which continues to this day.

How did President Mobutu work to create a new 'Zairian' identity?

Mobutu's seizure of power was welcomed everywhere. Even Cardinal Albert Malula of Kinshasa celebrated a '*Te Deum*' mass that evening of 25 November 1965 to thank God, as Mobutu and the army worked to avoid another crisis. And, having experienced the challenging period of rebellion and cessation of hostilities, Mobutu strove for national unity based on the Lumumbist ideology he claimed to embody. He even rehabilitated Lumumba, proclaiming him a national hero in 1966. Mobutu also built in his memory the '*Echangeur de Limete*', a staircase over a hundred metres long, and renamed Boulevard Leopold II Boulevard Lumumba. Mobutu modernised the army by sending young recruits to military schools and academies around the world, and introduced a genuine policy of transferring public civil servants throughout the country, thereby burying the tribalism that had led the country to hell during the first independent's years. In 1971, he changed the country's name from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the Republic of Zaire — initially the name of the new currency introduced in 1967, which was valued at two US dollars to one Zaire. After nationalising major companies such as the former Union Minière du Haut Katanga, which became Gecamines, Mobutu adopted the negative economic policy of 'Zairianisation': the nationalisation and privatisation of the enterprises and individual foreign companies confiscated and handed over to Mobutu's supporters. As they were mismanaged, the whole economy collapsed, and the policy transformed into 'retrocession': the companies were handed back to their owners, who were no longer willing to devote themselves to them, while the government compensated them. This marked the beginning of Zaire's downward spiral, a period characterised by enormous prestige spending which coincided with the fall in copper prices and, above all, the petrodollar financial crisis of the 1970s. President Mobutu changed the flag by adopting a green background and a yellow circle in the middle with a red torch (of revolution) inside the circle. Colonel Joseph Mobutu, who later became a general and a field marshal, equipped and modernised the national army, united all Zairians and fought against tribalism and regionalism.

And, Mobutu's MPR became a real political machine...

While the MPR's constitution, the Nsele Manifesto, was promulgated on the day the party was founded, on 20 May 1967, and the country's revised constitution provided for two political parties based on the American model, Mobutu changed everything to establish the MPR as the sole political party. Copying the model of communist parties, this party had become a '*Parti-Etat*,' party-state, by the 1980s. In other words, the party was above the state, and its institutions and leaders were above those of the government. The President of the Republic was first the founding president of the Popular Movement of the Revolution, and then Head of State. This meant that no one could become Head of State without first becoming president of the party. Mobutu's speech on democratisation on 24 April 1990 marked the end of the MPR's hegemony. Mobutu also sought to boost the self-esteem of the Congolese people, notably through his '*Recours à l'authenticité*' (Recourse to Authenticity) policy: Zairians abandoned Christian first names in favour of 'post-noms' (post-names)⁷⁵ anyone must add, and the wearing of western suits and ties was banned in favour of the new '*Abacost*' (down with the suit) style: similar to the Chinese dress, it was to be worn with a scarf instead of a Western suit and tie.

⁷⁵ There is thus a whole generation of Congolese, formerly Zairians, born during those years, without Christian names, and according to the proverb that says, "*The names often given to dogs are hurtful and slanderous references to neighbours*," each person either took the name of an ancestor or parent, or added a proverb with a specific meaning to his name. The most unfortunate were those of mixed race who had taken the names of their foreign fathers. Joseph Désiré Mobutu, Justin-Marie Bomboko, Joseph Nsinga, Etienne Tshisekedi, Pierre Lebughe, Mgr Lesambo Ndamwize, Abbé Laurent Monsengwo, Albert Delvaux, Léon Lobich, Mario Cardoso, Cléophas Kamitatu and Bernardin Diaka became Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa Za Banga, meaning '*The all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, goes from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake*.' Bomboko Lokumba Iselenge, Nsinga Udjuu Ungwakebi Utube, Tshisekesi wa Mulumba, Lebughe Litite Akpa Nkieme, Mgr Lesambo Ndmwize, Abbé Monsengwo Pasinya, Mafuta Kizola, Kengo wa Dondo, Losenbe Batwanyele, Kamitatu Masamba and Mungul Diaka. Some clever individuals did not have a post-name. For example, Cardinal Albert Malula opposed the state and party directive imposed the Catholic Church to avoid baptised with Christian names of saints, but with these surnames instead; another example is Alainfranque, who took his mother's name, Monzelo, and added Sese (Mobutu's surname).

Women were banned from wearing skirts and trousers and permitted to wear only African loincloths. Standard international titles such as ‘mister/monsieur’, ‘madame’, and ‘mademoiselle/miss’ were replaced by ‘*citoyen et citoyenne*’ (citizen), while ministers and deputies became ‘*Commissaire d’Etat*’ and ‘*Commissaire du peuple*.’ Mobutu also introduced a programme of free public work, named ‘*Salongo*’, which involved cleaning gutters, weeding public areas and sweeping streets. Hence the famous slogan of the time: ‘*Salongo alinga mosala*’ (Salongo likes to work for free). The press was not free and all newspaper front pages, as well as radio and television editorials, had to be devoted to Mobutu and the activities of the party, adorned with political slogans such as: ‘*MPR = Servir, se servir, non!*’ (MPR = To serve, not to serve yourself), ‘*Lokuta monene, oyo akanisaka MPR ekokufa, waya!*’ (It’s a lie and an illusion to once believe that the MPR will one day die, big lie!), ‘*MPR ya libela libela*’ (MPR forever), ‘*Olinga, olinga te, ozali na parti*’ (Like it or not, you belong to the party), and so on. The MPR also had specialised institutions, such as the ‘Condition Féminine et Famille’ (Women and Family Affairs) and the JMPR (MPR Youth), but Mobutu, who granted himself the right of life and death over all citizens, employed well-paid secret agents and services to promote his own image. Mobutu’s megalomania and intoxication of power, with his pictures everywhere displayed, were glorified by the regime’s troubadours, including Sakombi Inongo. As Minister of Information, he produced special television spots in which a photo of Mobutu was brought down from the clouds at the start of each news bulletin, creating the impression that Mobutu was a demigod. With party committees in every company, school and organisation, the MPR also organised entertainment sessions: *animations politiques*. Each administrative entity recruited dancers and singers who performed all day long to glorify Mobutu and sing the praises of the party. These entertainers were paid by the government, and there were even competitions for them during MPR’s anniversary on 20 May and Mobutu’s seizure of power on 24 November, marked by large celebrations, which sometimes included ‘animation’ competitions. This was a practice that Mobutu had copied from Kalonji Albert Mulopwe, who was president of the short-lived State of South Kasai. His residence was always bustling with groups of dancers singing his anthem, a practice that Mobutu also adopted: “*Dia lelo kumbanzilanga eh Mulopwe Mobutu*”. President Mobutu also copied certain

leadership symbols from Lumumba and Pierre Mulele, including the leopard hat and leopard skin insignia. He also added his inseparable walking stick that he always carried with him.

What are the positive aspects of this policy of resorting to authenticity?

It allowed the Congolese to reconnect with their past and their ancestors, to delve into their origins, and to learn about their culture, which had been thrown away by Western schools and the evangelisation. Political movements drew on the cultural wealth of the Congo, a reservoir of cultures, music and dances that benefited modern Congolese music, rumba, now recognised as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO.

Did a moral crisis also occur during Mobutu's MPR?

These Mobutu and MPR times were years of moral crisis in the country, of anti-values known as '*le mal Zairois*' (the Zairian immorality, the Zairian evil): Embezzlement of civil servants' salaries and delays in paying teachers' salaries had become commonplace; cuts in the education and health budgets had led to a drastic decline in the quality of education and health care; moral decay, especially among young people; the practice of cohabitation or having mistress, known as 'bureaugamy', which differed from traditional polygamy; and corruption at every turn, especially as Mobutu declared the state secular and the Parti MPR teaching to take over the vacuum left by the banishment of all religion from public institutions, including schools, where religious instruction was replaced by political and civic education, prayers by revolutionary songs to the glory of Mobutu and the party. The administration and education were invaded with corruption and, above all, non-payment of salaries, with disastrous consequences for the education of young people in particular. Health, roads, the once-famous public aviation companies Air Zaire, river transport ONATRA, and the railways, to name but a few, were so badly managed that they became poor relations, while the army was poor in name only. Driven by his megalomaniacal desire for power, Mobutu's courtiers excelled in acts of flattery, becoming the regime's thurifers and troubadours. The religious lesson was replaced by '*Mobutisme*', meaning the words and deeds of Mobutu, the Founder President (*President Fondateur, PF*) of the MPR, which were memorised and recited. While the MPR and Mobutu cannot be blamed for all the country's current problems, it is certain that they

introduced a way of mismanaging the country that future powers could easily copy if they are not committed to breaking with the past.

Everyone was silenced except for the Catholic Church and its powerful Cardinal Joseph Malula.

The Catholic Church, which accounts for almost two-thirds of the Christian population in the Congo, has been a powerful agent of social change since the early years of colonisation. Even if it benefited from government and colonialist support, the Catholic Church remains financially independent and ideologically free of its opinions. Initially, it swiftly commenced training local priests and agents to assume the responsibilities of Western missionaries' work when they finally returned to Europe. These priests and the Protestant missionaries were the first to oppose and denounce Leopold II's atrocities, while the Catholics inspired and supported the first political parties: a Jesuit Father assisted Edmond Nzeza to create the Alliance des Bakongo, ABAKO, while the political party Mouvement National Congolais, MNC, whose president was Lumumba, was founded within the parish of Christ Roi, where the priest, Albert Malula, gathered Catholic intellectuals 'Conscience Africaine' association and organised evening courses taught by professors from Lovanium university. And, in the history of the independence, after the Belgian professor Van Bilsen 1955's *'Un plan de trente ans pour l'émancipation politique de l'Afrique Belge'* (*Thirty-Year Plan for the political emancipation of Belgian Africa*), the first Congolese reaction came from those Catholic 'Conscience Africaine', which published its Manifesto, the first political document by Congolese, followed by the Counter-Manifesto of ABAKO. There was also the Congolese Catholic bishops pastoral letter advocating for independence as the Church have already trained and educated a secular elite for this purpose. Also, during the rebellions, Catholics paid the price through the murder of priests and nuns, including the renowned Sister Anuarite Nengapeta rebels Simba killed in Isiro on December 1, 1964, and beatified on August 15, 1985, in Kinshasa by Pope John Paul II during his second trip to the DRC. During those MPR years, Cardinal Malula became the only clear-sighted person to sound the alarm against Mobutu's dictatorship; a Mobutu the priests even sponsored for his study in Europe, in his case, Father Scheutist Arthur du Vernay, who later founded the Bondeko Centre and Hospital in Kinshasa, like many others including Marcel Lihau, Thomas Kanza, etc. The conflict between the Catholic Church and the state was rooted

in Mobutu's MPR's derailment of morals and values, as the Church refused to abandon the practice of baptising with Christian names and nationalising seminaries. Cardinal Malula fled into exile in Rome for months, as Mobutu confiscated his properties, buildings and belongings, religious lessons, crosses, medals and prayers banned from nationalised schools and universities, and Mobutu moved further requesting the Church to baptise using the new post-names instead of first Christian ones. One of the famous slogans said that *'the MPR is a religion, its founder, Mobutu, is the Messiah and his mother, Maman Yemo, was Mary, Jesus' mum*, which Catholics and especially its Cardinal Joseph Malula could never accept.

Another fact of those crisis years: Verckys' song...

In 1973, the singer Kiamuangana Verkys edited a popular Rumba song: *"Nzambe nakomitunaka"* (God, I keep asking myself: *"Ae eh nakomitunaka... Nzambe nakomitunaka... Mposho mwinda ewuta nde wapi ooh. Nkoko ya biso ya kala ye nde nani? Yesu mwana Nzambe ye nde mindele. Adamu na Eva bango nde mindele. Basantu nyonso bango nde mindele. Mpo na nini ? Ba buku ya nzambe tomonaka boye. Basantu nyonso photo se mindele. Ba anzelu nyonso photo se mindele. Soki zabulu photo moto Mwindo. Injustice ewuta wapi? Bango mpe bakanga biso mayele te. Bikeko ya bankoko bango baboyaka. Nkisi ya bankoko bango baboyaka. Kasi na ndako ya Nzambe biso tomonaka boye. Tokosambela chapelet na maboko. Tokosambela bikeko bitondi ndako. Kasi bikeko yango se mindele. Mpo na nini nzambe? Ba prophètes ya mindele biso tondimaka. Kasi ya bato moindo bango bandimaka te. Mpo na nini nzambe osala biso boye. Africa miso efungwani. Africa tozonga sima te"*⁷⁶. It was a patriotic and anti-colonial song

⁷⁶ "My God, I wonder and I question myself. Where does the black man come from? Who are our ancestors? Jesus, the Son of God, is a white person. Adam and Eve are also white. All the saints in the church are also white. But when it comes to the devil, he is black. Where does such injustice come from? They are intelligent, the whites, while we, the blacks, are so stupid. When we go to church, we pray with the rosary in our hands. But when it comes to our fetishes, they refuse them. When we are in the church, it is full of statues, and all these statues are only of white people. All the images of the saints are of white people. When it comes to the demon, his statue is black. Where does such injustice come from? We believe in their prophets, while they never believe in our black prophets. Why, O God, did you make it so? The eyes of Africa are now open. Africa, let us never go back again." (<https://youtu.be/DcW40E-rRxQ?si=Os6bOibFcgNAng9w>).

that Mobutu used as a mentality wake-up and anti-clerical propaganda tool for the state that became secular. Cardinal Joseph Malula of Kinshasa excommunicated the musician, but he was later pardoned. With the Africanisation of the Church, and especially the Zairian rite of Mass, statues and ornaments in the Church became African and black. As Cardinal Malula also launched the new Congolese Sisters congregation, wearing African loincloths.

What was the moral impact of the over-politicisation of public life in Zaire, and especially on the education system?

Zaire was turned upside down. Public and private morality plummeted to zero, with corruption spreading everywhere, leading to a drop in standards in schools (the government, for years, was no longer providing them with books and other materials) and universities that were now little more than empty shells as they were nationalised and formed the Universities of Zaire (UNAZA). And, when the same students challenged the regime, they were killed, jailed, conscripted into the army and the universities were closed. When they reopened, security agents infiltrated them, and the government stopped paying their scholarships and catering. The latest episode in this turbulent relationship was the massacre of students in Lubumbashi on 11 May 1990, which remains shrouded in secrecy and forced the international community to declare Mobutu persona non grata. Along with the economic crisis, the country fell into a deep hole and has remained in crisis to the present day. First came private schools, such as Ecoles Massamba in Kinshasa, followed by private universities, including denominational ones. After a few years, as the standard of education deteriorated, the regime negotiated agreements with religious denominations to take over the schools, which became Catholic, Protestant, Kimbanguist, Muslim, and so on. The same applied to health and social services. But the damage had already been done. The Catholics succeeded in preserving the independence of their seminaries and novitiates. And, expelled from the national university curriculum, the catholic faculty of theology became a private ecclesiastical institution, now the Catholic University of Congo, while Protestants also established their own university.

How did Mobutu finally cool down?

Meanwhile, Mobutu—who, in the name of state secularism, seemed to have deserted the Church — is believed to have retraced his steps with the advice of his then wife, Maman Marie-Antoinette. Then, he inspired the government, which invested in new enterprises:

vehicle assembly companies, shoe factories, modern furniture, renowned bakeries, etc. These companies invested primarily in the social welfare of their workers. The Marshall Mobutu Sese Seko regime created a middle class of Zairian entrepreneurs who benefited from small loans that they managed well. In 1969, Augustin Dokolo undertook an ambitious achievement: the creation of the Bank of Kinshasa (BK), the first bank with national capital in sub-Saharan Africa, with an initial capital of 300,000 Zaïres (600,000 USD). When his Portuguese father abandoned coffee plantations, Jeannot Bemba Saolona successfully launched his Scibe Zaïre company, which even had an airline. While the colonial remnants of state and parastatal companies (ONATRA, AIR Zaire, CMZ, etc.) declined as they were mismanaged. Even the towns, public infrastructures and buildings were never restored and rehabilitated, and the lack of planning undoubtedly contributed to their demise. The unchecked rural exodus turned the towns into dumping grounds. Ultimately, even the Zaire currency suffered incredible depreciation. The only solution was to print more money with the notes still bearing Mobutu's effigy, and several zeros — including the famous 5,000,000 New Zaïres, nicknamed Dona Beija — were no longer worth much. Demonetisation and the New Zaire did not solve the problem.

Mobutu strengthened the Congolese soft power: homogeneous culture, artistic expressions and sports development.

However, if there was one area in which Mobutu's politics excelled, it was in the arts and sports. He set up a foundation for national unity and the creation of a Zairian identity. Using the vast array of traditional music inherited from the 300 Zairian tribes, Congolese Rumba music and dance produced its finest works, showcasing artists of unquestionable talent who, above all, possessed the innate ability to play the guitar, choreograph dances, and compose songs for every occasion, ultimately conquering the world. Sports too. The national football team, Leopards, have won the African Cup of Nations twice (in 1968 and 1974). Their player, Ndaye Mulamba, still holds the record for scoring nine goals in a final. The Leopards were also the first all-black sub-Saharan African team to compete in the 1974 World Cup in Germany. However, it was a disastrous performance: the players refused to play properly, and their staff members and the minister who accompanied them embezzled their bonuses. President Mobutu Sese Seko

Kuku Ngbendu waza Banga also organised in 1974 a heavyweight boxing fight between the two Americans, Mohamed Ali and George Foreman: the first won it.

And, former allies of Mobutu decided to make their voices heard. How did they do it?

Mobutu became obsessed with power and its symbols: his leopard hat, his cane, and his nickname, ‘the Great Leopard.’ Mobutu pacified the country and fostered a national identity, combating tribalism, but his regime was characterised by an incredible lack of good governance and intolerance of any opposition. At the height of his fame, his name was sung from every rooftop, and he was welcomed with open arms in the West. Despite his dictatorship and single-party state, inspired by communism and popular throughout Africa, he was welcomed around the world as he played the role of a bulwark against communism in Central Africa. However, on 15 February 1982, some politicians, including his close friend Etienne Tshisekedi wa Mulumba, who had helped him create his MPR, founded an opposition party: The **Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social (UDPS)**, which became the spearhead of democracy and opposition to Mobutu during the years of heavy dictatorship in Zaïre. Mobutu was furious with all the UDPS founders, who were jailed, sent back to their villages and tortured. Meanwhile, in exile, the Lumumbists prepared for their revanche, which came in 1997 with the AFDL they joined. This marked another new chapter in upside-down Congolese history. Like the MPR, which had no real roots, the changes of the 1990s caused the UDPS to disintegrate year after year. When its main leaders, Frederic Kibasa Maliba, Vincent Mbwanikiem Nyaroliem and Professor Marcel Lihau Ebwa left or founded their branches, Etienne Tshisekedi became the president of a shadowy remaining party. Another event that turned the world and Mobutu’s Zaïre upside down was the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Fall of the Berlin Wall, the End of the Cold War

What caused the so-called ‘Eastern Wind’?

The fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 was a significant turning point in world history: the launch of the end of the USSR, the Cold War and communism, and it marked the beginning of a period of change in the world that had been underway since Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985. He introduced radical reforms known as ‘*perestroika*’ and ‘*glasnost*’ to alleviate the USSR’s

economic crisis. Gorbachev stopped financing the USSR's allies, which led to the downfall of several dictators, the first of whom was Romania's Ceaușescu, arrested with his wife Elena, tried, sentenced to death and executed live on television, on 25 December 1989. Similar to the storming of the Bastille during the French Revolution on 14 July 1789, the fall of the Wall became a symbol of change and paved the way for German reunification on 15 March 1991.

How did those changes start?

The beginning of the Cold War was also marked by barbed wire borders stretching over 8,500 kilometres between Eastern and Western countries. One border was located in Northern Europe and separated Finland from the USSR; the other stretched from the Baltic to Trieste. It was British Prime Minister Winston Churchill who coined the term 'Iron Curtain', and it stuck. In the German Democratic Republic, the 'Iron Curtain' was a 1,275-kilometre-long metal fence equipped with acoustic and visual alarms, monitored by 14,000 border guards. In Czechoslovakia, sections of the border with Germany and Austria were marked by a double network of barbed wire and electrified fencing, as were the 260 kilometres separating Hungary from Austria. Some sections were equipped with anti-personnel mines and automatic weapons. It was Hungarian Prime Minister Miklós Németh who launched the changes, as Moscow's Gorbachev he referred to, did not say anything: he lifted the 'Iron Curtain' on 2 May 1989, on the 260 km border with Austria, thus allowing Hungarians to pass to the West. On 10 September 1989, he decided to open the border completely. It was a true revolution.

What is next?

Meanwhile, the USSR fell apart on 26 December 1991, splitting into sovereign states including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, while others joined the new Russian Federation. For the West, it was capitalism's victory over communism and the USSR, which they quickly leveraged to expand eastwards. Having been weakened, the Russian Federation's international reputation bounced back when Vladimir Putin came into power in May 2000, while other new countries, China for example, and organisations such as BRICS, emerged while some others disappeared: the Warsaw Pact

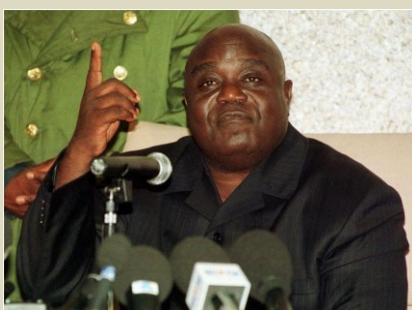
and the united Yugoslavia fell apart into new independent states, East Germany reunited with West Germany.

What has happened to the *Françafrique*?

Geopolitically, French President François Mitterrand was also taken aback by the fact that France was losing the role that the West had entrusted to it during the Cold War: policing the French-speaking African countries and acting as a bulwark against communism in those countries. Now that the enemy, communism, had disappeared, everything had to be reinvented. At the 16th Conference of Heads of State of Africa and France in La Baule on 20 June 1990, President Mitterrand stated that African presidents and regimes must democratise, embrace multiparty politics, respect freedom of speech and the press, guarantee the independence of the judiciary, and end censorship. In short, they must embrace democracy.



President J. Mobutu Sese



President L.-D. Kabila

So what happened also to Africa, as most of the countries were ruled by dictators and their single parties?

With the end of the Cold War, African communist dictators Mengistu of Ethiopia, Siad Barre of Somalia, Mathieu Kérékou of Benin and Moussa Traoré of Mali were ousted from power one after the other, either by free and democratic elections, street uprisings or National Conferences, which were the transitions from dictatorship to democracy and modelled on the French Revolution's "Etats Généraux". Benin was the first to implement this process: a gathering of delegates from across the country, led by the Catholic bishop Isidore de Souza, decided to abandon Marxism-Leninism, vote for a transitional period, elected a Prime Minister, wrote a democratic constitution and free elections were organised and won by Nicéphore

Soglo who replaced the Kerekou, who democratically returned to power after Soglo's single term. Other African dictatorships adopted the same soft power mechanism of change, with varying initial success. In Congo-Brazzaville, Denis Sassou Nguesso lost power to Pascal Lissouba before returning after a civil war between them. In Gabon, the process yielded little change, while in President Marshall Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire — a country of past, present and future tenses — the two-year and 2.000 National Sovereign Conference's delegates became an interminable, costly and noisy deliberation with no achieved outcome, even led by the Catholic Bishop Laurent Monsewngwo.

Nelson Mandela's years

Another event of those years: Nelson Mandela's release after 27 years in South Africa's Apartheid prison.

It was those events that people remember exactly where they were and what they were doing when they happened: on 11 February 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years, and walked out hand in hand with his wife Winnie Madikizela Mandela, an icon of resistance during the Apartheid regime. She quickly raised her left hand, followed by her husband's right hand. This was a significant milestone marking the beginning of the end of apartheid, leading to the first free and fair South African elections based on the principle of '*one person, one vote*', which the black people's party, and mainly the African National Congress (ANC), had fought for. Nelson Mandela was finally elected South African president in 1994. And he chose the former white President, Frederik de Klerk, as his deputy president, and they both won the Nobel Peace Prize the previous year in 1993 for their contributions to the peaceful transition and abolition of apartheid.

Did some events contribute to this process?

Yes. The end of the Cold war, the rise to power in South Africa of Frederik de Klerk, who organised the 1991 referendum in which white South Africans voted for the end of apartheid and the release of Mandela; the meeting in 1985 in an aeroplane between Winnie Mandela, who was on her way to visit her husband in hospital, and the Apartheid Minister of Justice Kobie Coetsee, whom she admonished for not releasing her husband and how they agreed to organise secret meeting between the minister and Mandela before

the later, secretly, met President Peter Botha; secret meeting in Somerset, England, organised by Michael Young, a British, between South Africans whites and blacks led by Thabo Mbeki by then in exile in London; top-secret request from ANC's President Walter Sisulu for those talks with the white authorities; the international anti-apartheid sanctions, and the concert with stars from around the world at London's Wembley Stadium, broadcast on radio and television, to celebrate the 80th birthday of Nelson Mandela who become a world-wide iconic leader and character.

Did those changes impact the Angolan War?

The Angolan war was another consequence of the Cold War in Africa. Pressured by the anti-colonial wars launched by Amílcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau in their African colonies, Portugal finally decided to grant independence to Angola and other African colonies in 1975. However, the three armed movements that fought for Angolan independence launched another crucial fight for the control of the capital, the one to seize it before the independence would proclaim it and lead the others: the Marxist MPLA, the UNITA and the FNLA, pro-Western, led respectively by Agostinho Neto, Jonas Savimbi and Roberto Holden. As it felt to be under pressure as the two other movements decided to unite, the MPLA of Neto sought help from Cuba, which supplied them with Russian arms and Neto declared independence and remained in the capital, after defeating Jonas Savimbi's UNITA, and Holden Roberto's FNLA, which abandoned the armed fight and had been absorbed by UNITA established itself in eastern Angola. Angola became a Cold War frontline as the West and the CIA supported and armed Savimbi and his UNITA via Mobutu's Zaire, and South Africa also supported Unita against the Namibian independence movement SWAPO, while Cuba, USSR, and other Eastern countries supported the MPLA of Augustino Neto. Each side sought support from its respective allies, resulting in the involvement of more than twenty countries in the Angolan conflict and war. The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale (14 August 1987–23 March 1988) ended in a stalemate, with neither side achieving victory or defeat for several months. This exhausted all the combatants and led to peace talks between the USA and Angola. The launch of peace talks between the US and Angola prompted Fidel Castro to request a direct meeting with the US, which was accepted. During the Egyptian round of talks in June 1988, a break occurred after a heated argument between the Cuban and South African heads of delegation,

which brought the two men together by chance in the bar. Over a drink, the idea of an honourable way out emerged — a peace of the brave — which everyone accepted, and the peace agreement was signed: the Cubans agreed to withdraw on the condition that apartheid ended, Nelson Mandela and the ANC leaders to be released, and the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO), which had been resisting the South African colonisation since the German First World War defeat. Cuba left, South Africa abandoned apartheid and released Mandela, and Namibia became independent on 21 March 1990, led by its first president, Sam Nujoma. Other nationalities also left. In Angola, Dos Santos and the MPLA won the elections, but Savimbi and UNITA refused the results and resumed their rebellion until Savimbi was finally assassinated on 22 February 2002: the end of the Angola war.

Which other actors should we remember for those changes?

In South Africa, the Anglican Church played a significant role in exercising soft power by appointing Desmond Tutu, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient in 1984 and a powerful anti-Apartheid campaigner, as the Archbishop of Cape Town. He later chaired the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a transitional justice system. The South African end of the apartheid peace process was later used as a model for achieving peace in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants. On 10 April 1998 (Good Friday), the Good Friday Agreement, also known as the Belfast Agreement, was successfully signed, ending the conflict that had begun in the 1960s. Another one was the 1993 Oslo Agreement signed by Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, and Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Unfortunately, it was rendered invalid with the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November 1995. Another actor in the field of soft power for change and the end of the Cold War and communism was Pope John Paul II: world geopolitics were impacted by the election of the Polish Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as Pope on 16 October 1978, replacing John Paul I, who had died unexpectedly after a month in office. His inaugural message, *'Do not be afraid'*, appeared to be directed at the communist countries, including his native Poland, where the Catholic trade union Solidarity, led by the Catholic Lech Wałęsa, was challenging atheistic communism. The Pope's first trip to his native Poland on 2 June 1979 strengthened the anti-communism campaign until Lech Wałęsa was elected

president of a non-communist Poland in December 1990. By that time, the Catholic Church in Latin America had launched its Liberation Theology movement for Christians and the Church to participate in communities' socio-political changes; its motto could be summed up by this theologian's quote: *'Liberate mankind; faith is not a tranquilliser.'* It was a world offering new hope.

What could be considered as Nelson Mandela's legacy?

Symbolically, Nelson Mandela's first steps from prison to freedom on the afternoon of 11 February 1990 constitute a meditative legacy: how he sacrificed everything for a noble ideal. Nelson Mandela's legacy, as he asserted in interviews, is his ability and that of his comrades to forget the pains and abuses they suffered during apartheid and advocate a multiracial society. And also, followed the example of Léopold Sédar Senghor, who, as President of Senegal from 1960, inaugurated the resignation of sitting African presidents in 1980 in favour of his protégé Abdou Diouf, after five years in power, Mandela decided not to stand for re-election in 1999, handing over his post to Thabo Mbeki. Also, under the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, South Africa inaugurated transitional justice by establishing the *South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)* in 1995 to investigate apartheid abuses and promote reconciliation by granting amnesty to identified perpetrators who publicly confessed their sins and to provide reparations to the victims. However, Winnie Mandela was the only one who refused to apologise for what Apartheid did to her. After leaving office, Nelson Mandela — who, alongside Desmond Tutu, promoted the African socio-religious philosophy of 'ubuntu' and launched the 'Elders' association, through which former world leaders could contribute to resolving global conflicts through dialogue while, to emphasise the importance of living together in community and solidarity, 'ubuntu', which is found in all Bantu languages: 'bomoto' in Lingala and 'kimuntu' in Kikongo, etc., means 'humanity to others' or 'I am because we are', a concept from the Zulu proverb *'Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu'*, meaning *'a person is a person through other people'* and encapsulates the African culture and philosophy of communitarianism and living together — a form of humanism.

How did Mobutu respond to the end of the Cold War?

The end of the Cold War opened a new chapter in Congolese history as dictatorial one-party regimes were either voluntarily or forcibly ushered into democracy. On 24 April 1990, Mobutu surprised the

world with a speech where he announced that the Republic of Zaire would restore the multi-party system that had been in place before 20 May 1967, when his single-party MPR was founded. He also announced his resignation from the MPR presidency and the recovery of the Western-Christian first names he prohibited, as well as the freedom to wear suits and ties and trousers for women, and the reuse of standard titles Mr., Mrs. and Miss. A new constitution was required in preparation for elections, after a transition period and the appointment of a new prime minister.

Was it the beginning of Mobutu's end?

It was a historic opportunity for him if he played his cards right and acted sincerely, as Matthieu Kerekou of Benin did: he lost power after democratic elections following the National Conference and transitional period led by a new elected Prime Minister and the change of the constitution abandoning the Marxist-Leninism mono-partyism ideology, kept his mouth shut for a term, and then returned to power via democratic elections. Unfortunately for Mobutu, he was merely playing an incredible Machiavellian game. This also marked the beginning of a turbulent political climate: Mobutu accepted a fully-fledged multi-party system, and since then, the country has seen more than 500 parties emerge, in addition to the MPR and the UDPS. As other countries inaugurated National Conferences, politicians pressured Mobutu to hold a Sovereign National Conference to establish the Third Republic. Unfortunately, the conference turned into an interminable and costly affair, with 2,000 participants and decisions that were never implemented. Led by Catholic Bishop Laurent Monsengwo Pasinya, one of the National Conference victories was Étienne Tshisekedi of the UDPS elected Prime Minister on 15 August 1992. However, when the conference decided to investigate the assassinations, especially that of Lumumba, which everyone knew Mobutu was involved in, the latter became angry and shut it down, a mistake which opened the door to 'hard power' or war, rather than 'soft power' changes. While, the democratisation process, the transitional period and the Sovereign National Conference had positive impacts: the resurgence of a new political consciousness; the liberation of long-suppressed speech; freedom of opinion and trade unionism; the emergence of civil society and NGOs, particularly those concerned with human rights and democracy; and the fact that there are Congolese around the world who hold their heads high: professors and experts

who contributed to the nation's future wealth. The Soviet-style management of the single party was shattered by the 'wind from the east' until Mobutu's fall. Memories of the MPR party-state are now dark and distant, but they must be recalled to prevent their model from being copied. The transition period would have succeeded if it had achieved political and management reforms, as since independence, politics has become an easy way to get rich rather than a public service, which explains the proliferation of political parties continuing to clutter up the public and social arenas to this day.

Are there some facts to consider the turning point of the DRC's history and Mobutu's regime?

During these years of transition, when the opposition was gaining credibility in President Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire, he became a pariah in the eyes of the international community after the massacre of students in Lubumbashi University on 11–12 May 1990. It was believed that the perpetrators were student informants and secret agents of Mobutu's security forces, natives of his province of Equateur. The incident was sparked by an altercation between some students and their colleagues, Rose Baramoto, the niece of General Baramoto, head of the special army/police unit 'Gardes Civiles', when her taxi failed to comply with the new Kasapa's Lubumbashi university campus roads and especially roundabouts named after Nelson Mandela, Perestroika, etc. She was molested and stripped naked, and the snitches who came to her rescue were abused and tortured to the point of confessing their crimes as secret agents. Following a secret meeting later between the governor of the Shaba region (now Katanga province), who was also from Equateur, and other security services, a punitive raid was decided and carried out on the campus on the night of 11 and 12 May 1990. Accounts differ: was it those student regimes' secret agents who rubbed white paint into their bodies to traumatise their comrades, or were there finally joined by special units of soldiers for them to perpetrate those massacres? The regime officially recognised only one student assassinated, whose body was sent back home for funerals. The campus was emptied the following day, and the regime immediately repainted it (to hide the crimes?). Human rights organisations, opposition parties, and, above all, Belgium seized the opportunity to sever ties with Mobutu's Zaire. Belgium had requested an international inquiry, which President Mobutu's regime, ostracised by the international community, had

refused and international sanctions followed as Mobutu became internationally a persona *non grata*.

Another unusual event occurred towards the end of Mobutu's reign.

During this DRC's history period of transition, starting with Mobutu's 24 April speech, from the second republic Mobutu launched with his coup in 1965 to the third one to be inaugurated with the next elections, the Catholic Church once again became the spearhead of social opposition. Like the national conferences in Benin and Congo-Brazzaville led by Catholic bishops, the one in Zaire was also led by the Catholic Monsignor Monsengwo. And, when Mobutu's Prime Minister, Jean Nguz Karl-i-Bond, unilaterally decided to shut down the conference in 1991, the Catholic Church organised a protest march on 16 February 1992 to open it. This march was suppressed by Mobutu's soldiers, resulting in several deaths. The day became known as Democracy Martyrs' Day. Even during the last years of Joseph Kabila's regime, as he planned to remain in power indefinitely by running for an unconstitutional third term, the Catholic Church took the lead again in protesting, and churches and places of worship were desecrated. A campaign of hatred was then unleashed against Catholics as they launched campaigns and rallies against the regime, resulting in the deaths of Thérèse Dechade Kapangala, who was shot dead on the doorstep of a Catholic parish in Kinshasa on 21 January 2018, and Rossy Tshimanga Mukendi, who was shot dead by police on 25 February 2018 while trying to help protesters find refuge in a Catholic church.

How did the regime act to stop such Catholic influence?

Relations between the Catholic Church and the state in Congo-Zaire continue to be rocky. At a time when the Catholic Church was beside the poor Congolese in line with its social doctrine and prophetic mission, a new religious phenomenon emerged in Zaire: the new Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. Favoured by Mobutu's regime against the usual Catholic influence, these churches were intended to counterbalance the social influence of the Catholic Church, particularly when the Protestants and Kimbanguists proved less cooperative. Among their supporters was Mobutu's director of security, Honoré Ngbanda, who also became a pastor of these new denominations. Known as the 'churches of revival' (Eglises de réveil), they proliferated under all the regimes that

succeeded Mobutu's, with a host of pastors, evangelists, prophets and bishops, some of whom wore Catholic garb, but all of whom were close to the powers that be. The most distressing case is that of the so-called Philadelphia Church in Kinshasa, whose prominent members include the current president, Félix Tshisekedi; Martin Fayulu, the opponent and real winner of the 2018 presidential elections; and Corneille Naanga, the current leader of the Alliance Fleuve-Congo and former director of the Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante, CENI, who proclaimed President Félix Tshisekedi the 2018 elections' winner, and now admits to lying before.

The Rwandese genocide...

And then came the beginning of the Central Africa tragedy with Habyarimana's assassination on 6 April 1994.

During these 1980s-1990s, armed rebellions or revolutions were everywhere fighting to overthrow the ongoing dictatorships, even supported by the West. One such group was the Rwandan Patriotic Front, which was founded by Rwandan refugees who had been living in exile in Uganda since their country gained independence in 1962. Throughout German and Belgian colonisation, up to 1918 and 1962, respectively, the colonists considered the Tutsi superior to the majority Hutu and Twa, and instrumentalised them accordingly. The colonists even incorporated these tribes into their identity cards. The Tutsis were thus favoured. As independence approached, however, the colonists realised that the Tutsis were unlikely to obey them. They therefore reversed the logic and instrumentalised the Hutus against the Tutsis. This explains why the Hutus won the independence elections, but not without driving out and killing millions of Tutsis, who went into exile in the Eastern DRC and Uganda. The Tutsis tried to return a few more times, but were always defeated by the Hutus. Around 1990, as the tide was turning against the dictatorships, President Habyarimana agreed to power-sharing negotiations, including a rebel presence in Kigali and the formation of a government of national unity led by a Tutsi. However, an unexpected geopolitical earthquake then occurred, with far-reaching consequences for Zaire. On **6 April 1994**, while returning from Tanzania round of peace negotiations with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), the plane carrying Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana, which was landing at Kigali airport, was hit by a missile: President Habyarimana, Burundian President Ntanyamira, other officers and

the crew were killed. This marked the start of the Rwandan genocide, during which 800,000 Tutsis, moderate Hutus, and a few Twa were massacred, mainly with machetes and any other tools and weapons, in an unprecedented display of barbarity banded by Hutu militias, *Interahamwe*, stigmatised by hateful messages from 'Radio Mille Collines'. Colonel Kagame's RPF finally entered Kigali and pacified the country, but not before striking iron with iron and fighting a fierce battle.

What role did the UN play in Rwanda during the genocide?

The **United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UN-AMIR)**, the Blue Helmets peacekeeping operation commanded by Canadian General **Roméo Dallaire**⁷⁷, found itself helpless, especially after the Belgian Blue Helmets made the strategic mistake of leaving following the assassination of ten of their colleagues, bodyguarding the transitional Prime Minister and her husband, the first to be assassinated. The major powers of the world hesitated, with only France intervening through its '*Operation Turquoise*', likely motivated by its agenda of avoiding losing influence in the region. Meanwhile, the French President, François Mitterrand, had strongly supported Habyarimana, and the RPF garnered support from the USA, which shielded and armed Museveni of Uganda.

How did the Rwandese start their exodus? And what were the consequences for the DRC?

The Tutsi who had previously and decades before escaped to neighbouring countries returned in Rwanda, while the Hutu and the suspected of being genocidaires fled *en masse* for refuge in the eastern Congolese city of Goma after the UN Security Council voted in favour of Resolution 929, which requested that Zaire open its borders to accept them. However, they became a threat to the new Paul Kagame's Rwandese regime when some of those armed refugees started training and preparing to attack Rwanda. The US and the UK, who supported Museveni's Ugandan regime and Kagame of Rwanda, took advantage of the changing situation in the region and backed Zaire's attack in August–September 1996.

⁷⁷ Despite his know-how and goodwill, he tried everything and remained frustrated for a long time. He titled his book, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, describing the day he faced the genocidaires, guns and machetes in hand. And his usual question: "*Are all humans human? Or are some more human than others?*"

Together with their Burundian allies and mercenaries from Eastern Africa, they organised a new rebellion: the **Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo/Zaire (AFDL)**, which appointed **Laurent-Désiré Kabila** as its spokesman. They took advantage of the collapse of Mobutu's tribal army and the disillusionment of politicians tired of Mobutu, who was in post-operative convalescence in Europe. The launched rebellion used the scapegoat of the withdrawal of Zairian nationality, previously granted to Rwandan natives settled in the country in several waves, and named themselves '*Banyamulenge*', as their young had crossed to receive military training in Rwanda and joined the rebellion. Unable to contain or repel the attacks, AFDL defeated Mobutu and his army. It acted as the iceberg for the Rwandese and Ugandan aggression, which quickly reached the capital Kinshasa after seven months, and ousted President Mobutu on 17 May 1997. His 32-year regime collapsed like a house of cards.

What lessons can be learned from the spectacular downfall of Mobutu, who ruled the country for 32 years as a former pawn of the Americans in Central Africa?

Mobutu's downfall offers many lessons and food for thought. He had not correctly read the situation he was in. Numerous circumstances then showed that he was no longer in control of his destiny, which had completely escaped him. Times had changed, as had politics and policing. Rather than embracing his time as Matthieu Kerekou of Benin did and returning in power after one term, Mobutu chose to manipulate it to suit himself. As for the Americans, their policies change with each new administration, and Mobutu's usual friends, the Republicans, lost power to the Democrats and Bill Clinton. Unfortunately. Having built his power on an army at his mercy, Mobutu failed to grasp the extent of its recent decline. The generals and officers were more interested in business than commanding troops, who, gradually, became demotivated. This was especially the case since corruption had become rife in the country's political apparatus, blinding Mobutu. From the first attacks in September–October 1996, the Rwandans and the newly formed rebellion, the AFDL, realised that they were facing a poorly paid and demotivated army unwilling to die for their leaders. Defeats mounted and city after city fell until Kisangani and Lubumbashi, where the AFDL and its spokesperson, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, had settled, were captured. American businessmen came to meet the AFDL in Lubumbashi,

offering a lucrative, multi-million-dollar contract for access to Congolese minerals — a guarantee for the rebellion. Realising that the army was in disarray, General Donat Mahele proposed to Mobutu that he be appointed Chief of Staff to regain the upper hand. Unfortunately, he was disappointed to find that the army was still in disarray, a situation made worse by the recruitment of mercenaries and the purchase of weapons overseen by the other generals close to Mobutu. The tragic conclusion was that General Mahele had no control over these weapons and would sometimes find himself on the front line without the corresponding ammunition. By April–May 1997, Mobutu's downfall was imminent.

Which battle finally ended Mobutu's reign?

Since the start of the war in September–October 1996, when Lema was attacked and captured, Mobutu's army has only really fought in the Bunia area, and particularly around Kenge, located 300 kilometres from Kinshasa. This stronghold was primarily occupied by the Zairean Armed Forces and Jonas Savimbi's UNITA soldiers. This prompted the Angolan president, Eduardo dos Santos, to deploy his troops to fight alongside the rebels, and resulted in the final defeat of Mobutu's soldiers in Kenge on 12 May 1997. Following this defeat, Mobutu's generals Likulia, Mahele, Nzimbi, Ilunga and Vungbo informed him in person that they could no longer ensure his safety in Kinshasa and that he had to leave. He left for Gbadolite on 16 May while the AFDL rebels entered the city from the outskirts.

An unusual incident occurred towards the end of Marshall Mobutu.

Courageous Mobutu's son, Captain Mobutu Kongulu — also known as Saddam Hussein — who attempted to regain control of the capital with the help of the remaining loyal soldiers of the 'Division Spéciale Présidentielle' (Special Presidential Division, DSP), assisted the last of Mobutu's supporters and family members remaining in Kinshasa to escape. However, the assassination of General Mahele in the DSP's Camp Tshatshi on the night of 16 May, where he had gone to calm down the soldiers after learning of their plans to revolt, changed everything. Kongulu then helped the remaining Mobutists and their families to cross the Congo River to Brazzaville, and he was the last to do so on the morning of the 17th, with cameras from around the world relaying the event. At Kongulu's request, his father, Mobutu, sent him his presidential

aeroplane, which left Gbadolite with its commander, Mukandila, to whom Mobutu gave 13,000 dollars for the fuel and other airport expenses. Once in Brazzaville, families and remaining supporters boarded the plane which took off and, several hours into the flight, General Bolozi inside the aeroplane was surprised to observe the Lubumbashi Gecamines chimney, although the city was in the hands of the AFDL rebels (in fact, AFDL was already in contact with Mukandila and had arranged for him to hand them over those last Mobutists, imagine the story!). Captain Kongulu burst into the cockpit and forced the commander to turn the plane back to Brazzaville; otherwise, he would cause chaos. Consequently, the world's cameras were surprised to see these Mobutists disembark in Brazzaville. The commander explained to Kongulu Mobutu that his father, Mobutu, was no longer the head of state and that the plane belonged to the country. Mobutu then requested his friend, the Togolese president Eyadema, who sent a special aeroplane to collect and take them abroad.

How did President Mobutu manage to escape Congo?

As the rebellion advanced, the new army Chief of Staff, General Donat Mahele, found himself unable to stop it. Having witnessed the army's disorganisation, he decided to collaborate with the AFDL to avoid the war in Kinshasa. After the fall of Kenge, some miles from Kinshasa, following the breakdown of negotiations between Mobutu and Kabila to whom Mobutu refused to relinquish power, a Mobutu who missed a golden opportunity the US Presented Bill Clinton offered him as his special envoy, the American ambassador Bill Richardson, delivered to Mobutu a direct unnegotiable message: to leave the power so that his safety and the security of his family and partisans to be guaranteed. As the generals finally told him, in a face-to-face meeting, that they could no longer protect him in Kinshasa, Mobutu left on 16 May for Gbadolite, and AFDL entered Kinshasa on 17 May 1997, while General Mahele was assassinated and shot down on the night of 16 May in the Tshatshi military camp. A clever and courageous bodyguard, Colonel Motoko, saved Mobutu and his family from Gbadolite, where either rebels or his own angry soldiers could kidnap them: he boarded all of them in a UNITA military aircraft that remained at the airport, and he had previously stopped for taking off. Having left Gbadolite for Lomé in Togo, Marshal Mobutu ended up in Rabat (Morocco), where he died on 7 September 1997. Meanwhile, the new president, Laurent-Desire Kabila — a former

Lumumbist from the 1960s — took power. Was it the history of revenge or the revenge of history? Kabila changed the name from Zaïre to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was the country's name between 1964 and 1971. The anthem, coat of arms and flag also changed in line with the regime change. Marshal Mobutu's regime came to an end after 32 years! Like a joke...

What kind of person was President Mobutu?

Marechal Mobutu Sese Seko is one of the key figures in the history of the DRC, the country he ruled for 32 years. After being expelled from Catholic schools, he joined the army. Curious and open-minded, he was demobilised and became a journalist. He met Lumumba and became a member of his party, the MNC. Lumumba later appointed him his secretary in Brussels, where Mobutu had studied, thanks to Catholic missionaries. Mobutu became a CIA and Belgian security agent before becoming the Secretary of State in the Lumumba government at independence. Following the vacuum with the departure of Belgian General Janssens, army Commander-in-Chief, during the post-independence mutiny, Lumumba appointed him Army Chief of Staff with the rank of Colonel, second to the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief General Victor Lundula. Mobutu led his first coup d'état on September 14, 1960, and appointed students to lead the country, following the crisis of September 5, 1960, when President Kasa-Vubu dismissed Prime Minister Lumumba, who in turn dismissed the president. President Mobutu later had Patrice Lumumba, Maurice Mpolo, and Joseph Okito arrested, and played a key role in their assassination on January 17, 1961, in Katanga. Many believed that it was Mobutu who arranged for Maurice Mpolo to accompany Lumumba and Okito on their death, as the hot-headed Mpolo, who once slapped and warned Lumumba about him, overshadowed him. When Lumumba appointed General Lundula as the Commander-in-Chief, Mpolo took over the interim position of Lundula, who was in prison: Lumumba and Kasa-Vubu confirmed it, as Maurice Mpolo, who also served as a soldier, was demobilised at a higher rank than Mobutu, and successfully assumed the role of Minister of Youth and Sports and acted professionally as the Commander-in-Chief. He welcomed the Blue Helmets and accompanied the Deputy Prime Minister, Antoine Gizenga, to the United Nations in August 1960. But, Mobutu was already preparing his coup.

In what ways did Mobutu seem to play wisely and smoothly?

Reports explained that, before independence, Mobutu was one of the clever and polite young journalists who socialised with white people and was eager to learn. This was probably a legacy of his childhood, when a Belgian lady — the wife of his late father's boss — almost adopted him. They would walk and socialise together, and she would teach him how to read and write and also help him to overcome any feelings of inferiority when meeting white people. Understanding the political vacuum and knowing the Congolese politicians, he asserted himself and seized the opportunity to become the army Chief of Staff. He reformed and equipped the army, becoming a bulwark against communism and earning the admiration of the West and the US. Devlin, the CIA director in Leopoldville, had already recruited Mobutu while he was still in Brussels. No other African has served the interests of the West as well as Mobutu did, but the way he finally died, abandoned by all those he served, needs to become a daily subject of meditation and interrobang. Most importantly, Mobutu died with the reputation of being a dinosaur of Zairean-Congolese finance. The fear is that those in power after him seem to be copying him at his worst; they have become worse: the DRC's predators: the embezzlement of millions of dollars in this country is scandalous, the number of national and international economic and financial mafias that are rooted in the domestic power establishment and operate openly is staggering, all the more so as new alliances with Middle Eastern oligarchies, which are known for their disregard for human rights and money laundering, are filling the vacuum left by the West. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a country, a people, a land and a nation, but not yet a republic. It is still a protectorate, with each new leader adopting the mantle of Belgian King Leopold II. Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Kasa-Vubu and a few others who saw their role as a priesthood were the exceptions that proved the rule. In the Congo, anyone in power first conjugates the verb 'to eat' in the first person singular, before hopefully using it in the plural. The crumbs are then thrown to the people.

What lessons can we learn from the end of Mobutu's rule?

Mobutu's demise teaches us that despite his millions in Western bank accounts and his houses in those countries, he could not even obtain a visa to travel to France or any other European country for medical treatment. He died without being mourned by more than a handful of people. Furthermore, Mobutu missed several opportunities to leave peacefully: he downplayed the incipient rebellion that

he could have negotiated with while it was still in the east. He also turned down an offer from the American President, Bill Clinton, who sent a special envoy, Ambassador Bill Richardson, to suggest that he sign his resignation in exchange for guarantees of his safety, as well as that of his family and property. The fact that he fell ill probably prevented him from analysing the situation properly, and as is often the case in such circumstances, his family became his only refuge. The assassination of Lumumba, the fall of Mobutu, and the ongoing war of the AFDL demonstrate, once again, that the lack of after-sales service solutions from the West, more often than not, is not in Africa's best interests. Following the long-awaited assassination of Lumumba, which had been planned and financed, Devlin, the CIA director in Leopoldville, said: *"The death of Lumumba did not resolve the political and military conflicts of the Congo... After the announcement of Lumumba's death, Leopoldville remained calm, and there were no reports of riots in the Congo. When [CIA] Headquarters asked why everything was calm, I replied that, in the Congo, nothing succeeds like success and nothing fails like failure"* (Mbu-Mputu, 2024: 506).

And then there's the coltan.

These Congolese invasions coincided with the development of the mobile phone and laptop industries, which require coltan, a rare mineral found in eastern Congo. Multinationals in need of these minerals made Rwanda and Uganda act as dealers of coltan, gold, diamonds and other Congolese resources. Once in power, Laurent-Désiré Kabila, whom they had installed and supported, broke their agreement and expelled them from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They refused to back down and launched the Second Congo War on 2 August 1998, establishing new proxy rebellions, including the M23 rebellion in 2025. But, once again, the blood of a Patrice Lumumbist stained Congo's history: President Laurent-Desire Kabila's assassination on 16 January 2001 in his palace in Kinshasa was another tragic chapter, when eastern Congo was transformed into a *no man's land* with more than a hundred Congolese and foreign armed groups, including armed opposition groups from Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, as well as alleged genocidaires whom Rwanda claims to be searching for but has never captured. In these regions, rape has also become a weapon of war. The late President Kabila's son, Joseph Kabila Kabange, became head of state and inaugurated a transition, drew up and approved a new

constitution in a referendum, and organised elections which he won twice, in 2006 and 2011, despite irregularities. In the 2019 elections, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi succeeded him. These elections were also considered fraudulent, with the claim that Martin Fayulu of the opposition was the real winner, recently confirmed by Corneille Naanga, director of the National Independent Electoral Commission at the time, who is now a warlord. In 2023, despite documented irregularities and fraud, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo won a second term of presidency. Joseph Kabila Kabange ended the rebellions and avoided balkanisation, without solving the Democratic Republic of the Congo's endemic crisis. Could President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo solve them without breaking the peace achieved by his predecessors? Alas, as usual, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda is supporting the M23 rebellion and the new one of Corneille Naanga: the "*Alliance du Fleuve Congo*"! Will it be a peace process agreement that will end those 30 years of conflicts involving specifically Rwanda and its proxy rebellions in Congo?

Decolonisation's pitfalls: Haiti vs France, Belgium vs DRC

What lessons can be learned from the decolonisation of African countries, and what are the consequences of this process today?

The Congo and Belgium were not the only countries to experience ups and downs in their historical colonial relationships. Many African countries experienced similar issues during their decolonisation and independence. Following the end of WWII, the participation of Africans and other people, and the foundation of the United Nations in 1945 — which proclaimed that all people must be free and independent — those metropolises and former colonising countries were forced to abandon their colonies, from which they had drawn many natural resources for centuries and exploited them free of charge. They started playing the same bad game everywhere. This was particularly evident when Asians and Latino Americans, who were predominantly non-Black, severed their connections with former European countries and achieved full independence. The UK established the Commonwealth to maintain links with all its former colonies and exert pressure to become the preferred partner for trade and the sale of raw materials, and France, under de Gaulle, did the same, particularly following Algeria's independence in 1962, achieved after a war that left thousands dead, with the French forced to leave Algeria. Consequently, it lost the opportunity to exploit Algerian oil. De

Gaulle's aide Jacques Foccart, in charge of 'Francafrique', established a network in Africa, selecting favourable heads of state and leaders, manipulating elections, bribing ministers and businessmen, and eliminating those who refused to comply with France, which established military bases in African countries and the CFA franc currency for those post-colonies, which is still used, printed and managed in France.

Were some facts, attitudes and behaviours involved in colonisation and the slave trade inhumane?

Of course, it's clear that some of them were wicked. Ethical standards were different back then, but evil persists. How can one accept that, after WWII, African soldiers mobilised from all over Africa, known as the '*Tirailleurs sénégalais*' (Senegalese Riflemen), were demobilised and settled in the Senegalese town of Thiaryoye? Before they returned to their countries, the French army killed those who were claiming their pay on 1 December 1944. There were indeed good Europeans and agents who should not be relegated to the dustbin of history. However, colonisation and the slave trade constitute *crimes against humanity*. Read Aimé Césaire's *Discourse on Colonialism* for an indictment of Western humanism and colonisation. The colonisers claimed to have brought civilisation, needles, mirrors, Western medicines, roads and schools to Africa. Contact between Europe and Africa not only created a clash of cultures but also helped eradicate certain unacceptable traditional African practices⁷⁸. Contact between Europe and Africa created a clash of cultures and helped eradicate certain unacceptable traditional African practices, of course, always in context. With hindsight, however, it's clear that some of these practices were wicked. Ethical standards were different back then, but evil persists.

To be honest, it's an incredible story.

France organised neocolonial actions to preserve its interests. Following its humiliating defeat at Diên Biên Phu in Indochina on 7 May 1954, which marked the beginning of the French Empire's

⁷⁸ For example, the royal clans of Basakata had slaves. Upon the death of the reigning chief, '*Mojuu itwii*,' it was customary to execute a slave to accompany him to the afterlife. The person who manages to stop this mortar is no longer killed, but changes caste and becomes '*Mbianshuu*,' and is granted inviolable land. This practice was banned by colonisation.

decolonisation, its only remaining assets were its African colonies, which it was determined not to lose. At that time, General Charles de Gaulle decided to establish a Franco-African community. However, during the 1958 referendum, all of the former French African colonies agreed to become part of the new De Gaulle's French Community, except Guinea-Conakry, led by Ahmed Sékou Touré, who declared that *'Guinea prefers poverty in freedom to riches in slavery'*. Guinea gained independence in 1958 after voting "no" in the referendum. In a bid to send a strong message to other Africans to avoid choosing independence, France acted evilly: the general ordered the destruction of any assets and equipment used in Guinea, including schools, businesses, administrative buildings, hospitals and even livestock. France never succeeded in assassinating Sekou Touré. However, President Sylvano Olympio of Togo did not survive. France assassinated him in 1963, thereby initiating a series of African coups and supporting numerous regime changes and dictatorships in Africa up until that point. As for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it was not in Belgium's interest for a pro-independence leader to properly manage the country, as he could have evaluated the agreements negotiated at independence. Following the political roundtable in January–February 1960, the May economic and financial negotiations, akin to a divorce settlement, divided the wealth and assets shared by the two countries during colonisation. Belgium received the lion's share, as the Congolese, unaware of financial and economic matters, even made Congo repay huge World Bank debts intended for Congolese development, which Belgium failed to deliver. This dispute is known in Belgian-Congolese historical relations as **'le contentieux belgo-congolais,'** or the Belgian-Congolese dispute. If resolved, Belgium could repay billions. France and Haiti are now facing the same problem.

What happened between Haiti and France?

While the ideas of the French Revolution in 1789 and its Convention (the assembly of the French Revolution) abolished slavery on 4 February 1794, returned to power in 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte decided to re-establish slavery, and sent his brother-in-law the General Leclerc to re-establish it in Saint-Domingue island where, in 1791, the black slave François-Dominique Toussaint Louverture became the leader of the Haitian Revolution, jumping on the ideas of the 1789 French Revolution opportunity with its motto of *'liberty,*

equality and fraternity', and he organised the first black resistance and uprising against the colonialists — Aimé Césaire said that it was with Louverture that Negritude stood up for the first time in history — was proclaimed Governor General and did not recognise Bonaparte's authority. Having made the big mistake of believing in the French good faith who invited him for a negotiation, Louverture was arrested and deported to France, where he died in 1803, and the island rose under the leadership of Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe. The French were defeated at the Battle of Vertières on 18 November 1803, and all the colonists were expelled and lost everything. On 1 January 1804, Dessalines declared the independence of the island they named Haiti, making it the first black country in the world to gain independence, which other black countries in the Caribbean copied later. The eastern part of the island declared its independence from Haiti in 1844 and became the Dominican Republic. Unfortunately, France and other powers did not recognise that independence. In 1825, King Charles X of France threatened not to recognise this independence unless Haiti bought it by paying 150 million gold francs to compensate former French colonists. Jean-Pierre Boyer, Haiti's president from 1820 to 1843, agreed with the proposal without consulting the population, and hence is considered a traitor by Haitians. As Haiti did not have that amount of money, it had to borrow from the bank that France had opened in Haiti for that purpose. It then had to repay the debts, commissions and interests. After an initial payment of 30 million francs, the country was unable to recover. To make matters worse, France lowered the price of Haiti's exported raw materials and commodities, especially coffee, as a punishment. Haiti became twice as impoverished as before and entered a vicious circle of poverty. The current poverty and social crisis in Haiti is a legacy of that French punishment. Haiti's '*double debt*' was paid off in 1883, but it wasn't until 1950 that all the bank charges were paid. In total, Haiti paid the equivalent of 560 million francs, which France reinvested in the construction of the Eiffel Tower, among other projects. In 2003, Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide raised the issue, but was subsequently overthrown. Like Haiti, new African leaders fighting for real independence use these past bad agreements to raise awareness of their ongoing freedom struggles. These new African leaders, whether from politics or civil society, still claim to be disciples of Lumumba. The arrest and transfer of former

president Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire to the International Criminal Court is part of this trend. Therefore, current anti-French rallies in Africa should not be mistaken for Africans anti-French thoughts, but rather as a response to the Western and French political double standards⁷⁹.

Contemporary D. R. Congo: Challenges and issues

Can we avoid constantly revisiting the past, confronting archives and reliving tragedies?

The past and present relationships between Africans and their Westerners, as well as the legacy of colonisation and the slave trade, continue to raise significant questions: it is the elephant in the room⁸⁰.

What problems might Europe face when revisiting that shared past?

Van Reybrouck's comments on his book *Revolusi*, which is about Indonesian independence, written after his masterpiece on Congolese history, are very accurate⁸¹: *“Even if one day we succeed in completely wiping out the debts of past colonialism, we will still have done nothing to stop the dramatic colonisation we are engaged in today, the colonisation of the future. Humanity is confiscating the*

⁷⁹ Furthermore, Africans opinions have been recently angered by the revelations of the Franco-Lebanese lawyer Robert Bourgi, who admitted to carrying, during decades, millions of dollars in cash and hidden in suitcases and even inside 'djembe' drums from African presidents such as Mobutu of Zaïre, Sassou Nguesso of Congo-Brazzaville, Omar Bongo of Gabon, Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso even Laurent Gbagbo of Côte d'Ivoire to French presidents, especially Jacques Chirac, and other politicians.

⁸⁰ This saying has different meanings. In English, *'the elephant in the room'* refers to an obvious problem or difficult situation that people are reluctant to address, or an unpleasant experience. In Africa, however, it is a proverb that means *'everyone is free to express their opinion on an issue'*, *'all the options are on the table'*, based on the idea that when a hunter slaughtered an elephant in the forest, anyone without a sharp machete would return to the village empty-handed. Both meanings are relevant to the slave-trade, decolonisation, and Western–African relations narrative.

⁸¹ Confavreux, J. & El Azzouzi, R., “David Van Reybrouck : “Il existe une forme de colonisation de l’avenir””, <https://histoirecoloniale.net/l-historien-flamand-david-van-reybrouck-retrace-l-histoire-de-la-decolonisation>, [Visited on 20 January 2025].

coming century with the same ruthless rigour with which it appropriated entire continents in ancient times. Colonialism is no longer territorial, it is temporal". For him, the past is a wound that often heals poorly and influences and clouds the minds of former colonists and the colonised. As the wound is still open, rather than thinking about colonialism in the past tense, he warns of the '*colonisation of the future*', carried out by the same past actors. The history of colonisation and the slave trade in Africa is lengthy, tragic and dramatic, and requires revisiting. Europe's main concern in this process is the potential financial compensation that could be requested, which could impoverish Europe.

Are there colonisation legacies in Congolese history?

The DRC's history is frustrating. The fundamental question remains: how can a country with such abundant mineral resources be one of the poorest in the world? The Belgian Congo got off to a good start, even if the Congo only received a small share of its own profits. By the time it gained independence on 30 June 1960, Congo's capital, Leopoldville, was nicknamed '*Poto moindo*' (Black Europe). It even had an electric '*gyrobus*' bus, which ran without overhead wires and was part of the urban development plan run by the company *Transports en Commun de Léopoldville* (TCL). The country's Lovanium University was one of the most prestigious in the world and boasted a nuclear station. Congo has an impeccable healthcare system that attracted patients even from South Africa, a road network that linked the entire country and a functional railway and river transportation system. Years later, the country had a world-renowned shipping and aviation company. When its currency, the Zaire, was launched in 1967, 1 Zaire was equivalent to 2 USD. It sounded like an ancient legend⁸². But how did all this happen? And

⁸² The late Businessman Marcel Lafleur told me how he arrived in Leopoldville (now Kinshasa) in 1956 via Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi). He had left his hometown of Liège by bike and travelled through Eastern Europe and Asia, took a boat to Australia he crossed, and took another boat to South Africa. As the dream was to live and die in Leopoldville, he arrived in Elisabethville and took a train and a boat to Leopoldville, where he built his empire. In his books, Georges Forrest also recounts how their father left Australia to South Africa for Katanga, where they all were born, to start the family business, which has prospered to this day. In his book from Moba to Boma, following the footsteps of his Daily Telegraph colleague Henry Morton Stanley, Tim Butcher recounts how he was astonished to discover when crossing Congo forests that

why didn't anyone do anything when decadence began to take its tragic toll? As a report by the British Parliament on the Democratic Republic of the Congo stigmatised, the country still seems the spectre of '*unfinished business*'! A challenge worth taking up! Despite the end of Belgian colonisation and the fall of Mobutu, Leopold II's shadow continues to imprison and haunt Congo. Time and again, Congo finds itself at the mercy of its leaders, who are in Leopold II's footsteps: they are involved in politics to serve themselves and their clan. Belgians inoculated Congolese politicians with some dangerous behaviours: corruption or the pursuit of easy public bil-



Former President J. Kabila – President F. Tshisekedi

lions, a lack of consistency, and transience. If we want to build a new Congo, we must work to eradicate these defects. Another danger stems from '*Mobutism*': Mobutu's mismanagement and his MPR party-state.

Having ruled the country with an iron fist for 32 years, Mobutu has influenced and captivated the Congolese political imagination to such an extent that there is a danger for any future Congolese politician to consider Mobutu as a political model, consciously or unconsciously. Once in power, political parties and their leaders behave like the MPR party-state: they are untouchable because they are the state. Unfortunately. The anti-values of the kind the deliberate confusion between state and public assets and one's private pocket, absurd notions of '*the presidential family*', '*sovereignty expenditure*', '*general expenses*', the mischievous games of the regime's thurifers

big trees supplanted railways, a country with backward-looking economic and development laws. A Greek-Congolese told him that, in 1970, the worst punishment when living in Kisangani was to be sent to Athens for holidays, as Athens has nothing to compare with Kisangani, a modern city.

and troubadours, budget overruns, excessive militarisation, the security services and their secret dungeons, clientelism, corruption, mismanagement of the army and corrupt officers increasing the number of soldiers on paper to pocket the salaries of fictitious ones, the *'tribal coterie'* the late Professor Marcel Lihau described, which is the national unity suicide, etc. are negative endemic behaviours to exorcise for ever.

How can the DRC escape this impasse?

The main challenge for post-colonial Congo is to establish a modern, functioning state. The Congolese people must imagine, modernise, plan and normalise the Congo. The country still needs a visionary leader to continue Lumumba's legacy. This is possible and achievable. The Congo continues to suffer the pains of giving birth to a republic and a nation. Congolese politicians are mediocre: a conglomerate of people at the top of the social pyramid who are considered to be the state. The DRC is still a familial, clan and tribal state. Today, more than ever. These evils and anti-values are Mobutu's negative legacy in the Congo and must be eradicated.

Finally, are there forgotten stories in the history of Africa and the DRC that are not taught?

Let us remember and reflect on the famous quote by the Malian Ahmadou Hampâté Bâ (1901–1991): In Africa, *'every old man who dies is a library that burns.'* Oral history is a treasure trove that is often not recorded or passed on. In contemporary history, some countries still keep their archives secret, containing historical truths that should be taught. We often mention only the 16th–19th century European transatlantic slave trade, which claimed 10 to 11 million victims, but talk less about the 7th–20th century trans-Saharan and Arab-Muslim eastern slave trade, which claimed 17 million victims. It would also be useful to revisit the other great African empires and kingdoms, such as the ruins of Zimbabwe in the heart of the Monomotapa Empire (from the Portuguese translation of the Shona language term Mwenemutapa, meaning 'Lord of the Conquered Lands'), and to recount the stories of the many black and African heroes who are often overlooked. Their portraits are displayed in the Black Achievers Hall at the Liverpool Slavery Museum. Modern history has great black characters and African cultural and artistic figures worth remembering. In the multimedia age, documentaries such as *'Afrique(s), une autre histoire du 20e siècle'* and Alain Foka's *'Archives d'Afrique'* and other sources are

important tools. We must not forget the bravery of Africa's female armies: the women of Nder in Senegal, the Amazons of Benin, and Queen Nzinga of Angola. Regarding ancient Egypt, Senegalese Cheikh Anta Diop's works and research on the anteriority of the black civilisation, pharaohs were blacks, and that the ancient Egyptian civilisation was a black one, should be made more widely known⁸³. Furthermore, young people, especially those of the diaspora, need to research more, digitise their findings, share them on social media and create African knowledge platforms and network with elders to discuss African philosophy, history, mythology, proverbs and wise sayings. Very few people, for example, know about the *Ishango Bone*⁸⁴. Africa has plenty of natural, spiritual, scientific, historical and medical riches. This was evident during the last pandemic of Coronavirus, as Africa surprisingly did not succumb to it. Medicinal plants, leaves, herbs, drinks, ginger and chilli powder certainly played their part, and we must revisit them and create a repertoire before they are lost forever. Learning African languages is an interesting step forward.

How to address such a learning or initiation challenge, while African history seems complex?

The new Welsh **Black History Cymru 365 (BHC365)** initiative is one of the best approaches: *"We believe that Black History should be taught and celebrated not just annually, but throughout the year. Black History Cymru 365 (BHC365) delivers an informative, educational and celebratory programme of events acknowledging the contributions made by the people of African and African-Caribbean descent to local, national and world history and culture all year round. Such an initiative aims to encourage everyone, irrespective of ethnicity or colour, to take part in events, learn about our shared global*

⁸³ Africa(s), another history of the 20th century: 100 years of Africa's history by its players. <https://madelen.ina.fr/serie/afriques-une-autre-histoire-du-20eme-siecle-2663?locale=en> [Visited on 25 Nov. 2024].

⁸⁴ Dating to 20,000 BC, these two bones are the oldest known mathematical sieve and table of small prime numbers. They were discovered by the Belgian anthropologist Jean de Heinzelin de Braucourt (1920–1998) in the 1950s at Ishango on the banks of Lake Edward in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are currently located on the 19th floor of the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences in Brussels.

history and celebrate diversity and cultural understanding”⁸⁵. The complexities of African cultures require a thoughtful approach to clarify the mix of ancient Egyptology, traditional African religions and symbols, Rastafarianism, and so on. Oral and written African literature is another interesting area to explore, and classic works should be read for pleasure.

Finally...

We must revisit and share our past by using the present-tense tools, sharpen certain narratives, distinguish between clichés and facts, consult available archives and talk to rare survivors, actors and witnesses. History is made of tragedies and mistakes, celebrations, anecdotes, comedies, setbacks, abstract images and the heroes who steer it upwards, as well as the negative ones who disorientate it downwards. Joseph Ki-Zerbo, the late Burkinabe professor and renowned historian who was the first African to write a history book about Africa, always advised **to read carefully a history page before turning it**, George Santayana added, **‘Those who fail to remember the past are condemned to repeat it’**, and as Antonio Gramsci wisely observed during history’s stammer, **‘the old world is dying, the new world is slowly appearing, and in this chiaroscuro monsters emerge’**. Changemakers like Edmund Morel and his ‘Congo Reform Association’ are role models. The proverb also states that **‘until the lions have their storytellers, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.’** And Patrice Lumumba’s famous premonition remains factual and relevant: **“Africa will write its own history.”** And, we are its actors and witnesses. So, it’s now our turn to play the game.

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⁸⁵ Black History Cymru 365 (BHC365), <https://blackhistorywales.org.uk/black-history-cymru-365-bhc365/> [Visited on 12/12/2024].

PATRICE LUMUMBA'S 30TH JUNE 1960 SPEECH

Men and women of the Congo,
Victorious independence fighters,
I salute you in the name of the Congolese Government.

I ask all of you, my friends, who tirelessly fought in our ranks, to mark this June 30, 1960, as an illustrious date that will be ever engraved in your hearts, a date whose meaning you will proudly explain to your children, so that they, in turn, might relate to their grandchildren and great-grandchildren the glorious history of our struggle for freedom.

Although this independence of the Congo is being proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, an amicable country, with which we are on equal terms, no Congolese will ever forget that independence was won in a struggle, a persevering and inspired struggle carried on from day to day, a struggle in which we were undaunted by privation or suffering and stinted neither strength nor blood. It was filled with tears, fire and blood. We are deeply proud of our struggle because it was just noble and indispensable in putting an end to the humiliating bondage forced upon us. That was our lot for the eighty years of colonial rule, and our wounds are too fresh and much too painful to be forgotten.

We have experienced forced labour in exchange for pay that did not allow us to satisfy our hunger, to clothe ourselves, to have decent lodgings or to bring up our children as dearly loved ones. Morning, noon and night, we were subjected to jeers, insults and blows because we were "Negroes". Who will ever forget that the black was addressed as "tu", not because he was a friend, but because the polite "vous" was reserved for the white man?

We have seen our lands seized in the name of ostensibly just laws, which gave recognition only to the right of might. We have not forgotten that the law was never the same for the white and the black, that it was lenient to the ones and cruel and inhuman to the others. We have experienced atrocious sufferings, being persecuted for political convictions and religious beliefs, and exiled from our native

land: our lot was worse than death itself. We have not forgotten that in the cities, the mansions were for the whites and the tumbledown huts for the blacks; that a black was not admitted to the cinemas, restaurants and shops set aside for "Europeans"; that a black travelled in the holds, under the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins. Who will ever forget the shootings which killed so many of our brothers, or the cells into which were mercilessly thrown those who no longer wished to submit to the regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation used by the colonialists as a tool of their domination?

All that, my brothers, brought us untold suffering. But we, who were elected by the votes of your representatives, representatives of the people, to guide our native land, we, who have suffered in body and soul from the colonial oppression, we tell you that henceforth all that is finished with.

The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed, and our beloved country's future is now in the hands of its own people. Brothers, let us start together a new struggle, a sublime struggle that will lead our country to peace, prosperity and greatness. Together we shall establish social justice and ensure fair remuneration for every man's labour. We shall show the world what the black man can do when working in liberty, and we shall make the Congo the pride of Africa. We shall see to it that the lands of our native country truly benefit its children. We shall revise all the old laws and make them into new ones that will be just and noble. We shall stop the persecution of free thought. We shall see to it that all citizens enjoy to the fullest extent the basic freedoms provided for by the Declaration of Human Rights. We shall eradicate all discrimination, whatever its origin, and we shall ensure for everyone a station in life befitting his human dignity and worthy of his labour and loyalty to the country. We shall institute peace in the country, not resting on guns and bayonets but on concord and goodwill. And in all this, my dear compatriots, we can rely not only on our own enormous forces and immense wealth but also on the assistance of the numerous foreign states, whose co-operation we shall accept when it is not aimed at imposing upon us an alien policy but is given in a spirit of friendship.

Even Belgium, which has finally learned the lesson of history and has not tried to oppose our independence, is prepared to give us its aid and friendship; for that, an agreement has just been

signed between our two equal and independent countries. I am sure that this co-operation will benefit both countries. For our part, we shall, while remaining vigilant, try to observe the engagements we have freely made. Thus, both in the internal and the external spheres, the new Congo to be created by my government will be rich, free and prosperous. But to attain our goal without delay, I ask all of you, legislators and citizens of the Congo, to give us all the help you can.

I ask you all to sink your tribal quarrels: they weaken us and may cause us to be despised abroad. I ask you all not to shrink from any sacrifice for the sake of ensuring the success of our grand undertaking. Finally, I request you unconditionally to respect the life and property of fellow citizens and foreigners who have settled in our country; if the conduct of these foreigners leaves much to be desired, our Justice will promptly expel them from the territory of the republic; if, on the contrary, their conduct is good, they must be left in peace, for they, too, are working for our country's prosperity.

The Congo's independence is a decisive step towards the liberation of the whole African continent. Our government, a government of national and popular unity, will serve its country. I call on all Congolese citizens, men, women and children, to set themselves resolutely to the task of creating a national economy and ensuring our economic independence.

Eternal glory to the fighters for national liberation! Long live independence and African unity! Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!



PATRICE LUMUMBA'S LAST LETTER TO HIS WIFE, PAULINE

My dear wife,

I am writing these words not knowing how they will reach you, and when they will, whether I shall still be alive when you read them.

All through my struggle for the independence of my country, I have never doubted for a single instant the final triumph of the sacred cause to which my companions and I have devoted all our lives. But what we wished for our country, its right to an honourable life, to unstained dignity, to independence without restrictions, was never desired by the Belgian imperialists and their Western allies, who found direct and indirect support, both deliberate and unintentional

amongst certain high official of the United Nations that organisation in which we placed all our trust when called on its assistance. They have corrupted some of our compatriots and bribed others. They have helped to distort the truth and bring our independence into dishonour.

How could I speak otherwise? Dead or alive, free or in prison by order of the imperialists, it is not I who counts. It is the Congo, our poor people, for whom independence has been transformed into a cage from beyond whose confines the outside world looks on us, sometimes with kindly sympathy but at other times with joy and pleasure. But my faith will remain unshakable. I know and I feel in my heart that sooner or later my people will rid themselves of all their enemies, both internal and external and that they will rise as one man to say no to the degradation and shame of colonialism and regain their dignity in the clear light of the sun.

As to my children whom I leave and may never see again, I should like them to be told that it is for them, as it is for every Congolese, to accomplish the sacred task of reconstructing our independence and our sovereignty. For, without dignity, there is no liberty, without justice there is no dignity, and without independence, there are no free men. Neither brutality nor cruelty nor torture will ever bring me to ask for mercy, for I prefer to die with my head unbowed, my faith unshakeable and with profound trust in the destiny of my country, rather than live under subjection and disregard sacred principles.

History will one day have its say, but it will not be the history taught in Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations. But the history which will be taught in the countries freed from imperialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history, and it will be to the north and south of the Sahara, a glorious and dignified history.

Do not weep for me, my dear wife. I know that my country, which is suffering so much, will know how to defend its independence and freedom.

Long Live the Congo. Long Live Africa!

Patrice

QUOTES

“But the reality is this. The authorities in the Congo are not interested in how cobalt mining benefits the local economy. They are only interested in what they can take in bribes. And it is easier to cunt sacks of rock and the border and work out how many dollars you can cream off per bag. Until that fundamental attitude changes, then the cobalt boom driven by China will not benefit more than a few members of the Congo elite.” (p. 68)

“The normal laws of development are inverted here in the Congo. The forest, not the town, offers the safest sanctuary, and it is grandfathers who have been more exposed to modernity than their grandchildren. I can think of nowhere else on the planet where the same can be true” (p. 141)

“I was born here in the Congo. When my parents, as a child, sent us back to Greece, it was more primitive than here. I used to look forward to coming back to the Congo because it was more advanced than Greece. Can you imagine that?” (p. 286).

“It taught me a lesson about one of the Congo’s chronic problems, its lack of institutional memory. The loss of life during the slaughter on the Ubundu-Kisangani road was of the same order of magnitude as the 11 September 2001 attacks in the United States, and yet in the Congo, there were no repercussions. There was no memorial, or historical account of what happened, or a court case to hold the perpetrators to account, or an international response. The killings simply got lost in the Congo’s miasma of misery. I wondered what hope there can be for a place if such lessons from the past are never heeded.” (pp. 247-248)

“But the thing that troubled me was why such scant attention is paid now to the Congo. According to the best estimates, since the conflict began in 1988, around four million Congolese lives have been claimed (1,200 a day) and, in spite of the 202 peace treaty, there has been no significant reduction in this daily loss of life. The international community seems to have developed a terrible Congo-fatigue, where deaths and suffering, even on the enormous scale reported by statisticians, somehow don’t register. The world seems to view the Congo as a lost cause without hope of ever being put right.” (p. 309)

Tim Butcher, **Blood River. A Journey to Africa’s Broken Heart**, London, Chatto & Windus, 2007.

Traité de cession
de l'Etat Indépendant du Congo
à la Belgique

Verdrag tot afstand
van den Onafhankelijken
Congo staat aan België.

Le Roi-Souverain du Congo ayant
fait connaître dans sa lettre du 5 août
1839 à M^r le Ministre des Finances de
Belgique, que, s'il convenait à la Bel-
gique de contracter, avant le terme
prévu, des liens plus étroits avec des
possessions du Congo, Sa Majesté
n'hésiterait pas à les mettre à sa
disposition; et les deux Hautes Parties
s'étant trouvées d'accord pour réaliser
des à présent.

De Koning. Souverein van Congo
hebbende, bij zijn tot den Koor Minister
van Financien van België gericht schrijven
van 5 Augustus 1889, te kennen gegeven
dat zoo België het oorsaa achtte, vóór
en gestelden termijn, zich nauwer te
in en met zijne bezittingen
geijst niet aan
ch. 88

Le traité s'entre

tablo ou
 Belgique par
 l'indépendant
 de nature et
 - ainsi que
 nations avec leur
 l'annexion
 n'a l'annexion
 rontaine et les
 aires qui sont la
 Indépendant, et
 nationnisme et
 ses lui appartenant
 annexes B. n^o 1 et 3.

Article 3.

Article 3.
et, la cession comprend
et tous les engagements
État Indépendant, tel
détaillés dans l'annexe C.

Article 4.

Article 4.
à laquelle la Belgique
l'exercice de son droit de
sur les territoires visés
sera déterminée par
royal.

Les recettes faites et les dépenses effectuées par l'Etat Indépendant à partir du 1^{er} janvier 1908 seront au compte de la Belgique.

En foi de quoi les plénipotentiaires
respectifs ont signé le présent traité
et ont apposé leur cachet.

Fait en double expédition
à Bruxelles, le 28 novembre 1907

De door den Onafhankelyken Staat
te rekenen van 1st januari 1908 gemaakte
ontvangsten en uitgaven zullen op
2 blz. rekening gebracht worden.

Een blyke waarvan de wederzydsche gevol-
machtigden dit verdrag hebben ondertekend
en er hun zegel op hebben afgedrukt.

In dubbel opgemaakt te Brussel,
200ten november 1907.

Artikel 3.

Artikel 3.
Anderszels, omvat de afstand gansch
het passief en al de financiële verbinten-
nissen van den Onafhankelijken Staat,
zoals die omschreven zijn in bijlage C.

artikel 4

Artikel 4.
De datum waarop België de
uitlevering van zijn recht van souve-
reiniteit aan de bij artikel 1 bedoelde
landstroken op zich zal nemen, zal bij
koninklijk besluit worden bepaald.

1. *Haviana*

gavine

Met. Liebaert

37 Des camp

Sim. Hubert

Aug Welbeck

Handwritten signature: *Handwritten signature*

John M. W. W.

Treaty of Cession of the Congo Free State to Belgium

The Sovereign King of the Congo has made it known, in his letter of 5 August 1899 to the Belgian Minister of Finance, that, if it were convenient for Belgium to contract, before the stipulated term, its closest ties with its possessions in the Congo, His Majesty would not hesitate to place them at its disposal; and the two High Parties having found themselves in agreement to carry out this cession as of now,

The following treaty was concluded between the Belgian State, represented by Mr Julien Davignon, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jules de Trooz, Minister of the Interior, Mr. Jules Renkin, Minister of Justice, Mr. Julien Liebaert, Minister of Finance, Baron Descamps, Minister of Science and the Arts, Mr. Armand Hubert, Minister of Industry and Labour, Mr. Auguste Delbeke, Minister of Public Works, Mr. Georges Helleputte, Minister of Railways, Posts, and Telegraphs, provisionally responsible for the portfolio of Agriculture, and Lieutenant General Joseph Hellebault, Minister of War, acting subject to the approval of the legislature,

And the Independent State of the Congo, represented by Chevalier de Cuvelier, General Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs; Mr. Hubert Droogmans, General Secretary of the Department of Finance; and Mr. Charles Liebrechts, General Secretary of the Department of the Interior.

Article 1. His Majesty the Sovereign King declares that he cedes to Belgium the sovereignty of the territories making up the Independent State of the Congo with all the rights and obligations attached thereto. The Belgian State declares that it accepts this cession, takes over and makes its own the obligations of the Independent State of the Congo, as detailed in Appendix A, and undertakes to respect the existing foundations in the Congo, as well as the acquired rights legally recognised to third parties, both indigenous and non-indigenous.

Article 2. The transfer includes the real and personal property of the Independent State, and in particular:

1° The ownership of all lands belonging to its public or private domain, subject to the provisions and obligations indicated in Annex A of this agreement;

2° All shares, bonds, founders' shares, or interests referred to in Appendix B;

3° All buildings, constructions, installations, plantations, and appropriations whatsoever established or acquired in Africa and Belgium by the government of the independent state, movable objects of all kinds and livestock which it possesses, as well as its boats and crafts with their equipment, and its military armament, as listed in Annex B Nos. 2 and 4;

4° Ivory, rubber, and other African products that are the property of the independent state, as well as supplies and other goods belonging to it, as listed in Annex B, nos. 1 and 3.

Article 3. On the other hand, the transfer includes all the liabilities and financial commitments of the Independent State, as detailed in Appendix C.

Article 4. The date on which Belgium will assume the exercise of its right of sovereignty over the territories referred to in Article 1 will be determined by Royal Decree. The receipts made and the expenditure effected by the Independent State as of January 1, 1908, will be to the account of Belgium.

In witness whereof the respective plenipotentiaries have signed the present treaty and have affixed thereto their seals.

Done in duplicate at Brussels on 28th November 1907.

H. M. STANLEY ENTERS THE SERVICE OF KING LEOPOLD II

“WHEN I FINALLY REACHED Europe in January 1878, slowly recovering from the effects of famine and fatigue endured on that long journey, little did I imagine that before the close of the year. I should be preparing another expedition for the banks of that river on which we had suffered so greatly. But at Marseilles railway station, as I descended from the express just arrived from Italy, two Commissioners from His Majesty the King of the Belgians, Léopold II, met me, and before I was two hours older I was made aware that King Léopold intended to undertake to do something substantial for Africa, and that I was expected to assist him. It would be needless to describe my feelings. (...) Early in November 1878, I received an invitation to be at the Royal Palace in Brussels at a certain date and hour. Punctual to the time, I there discovered various persons of more or less note in the commercial and monetary world, from England, Germany, France, Belgium, and Holland, and presently we were all ushered into the council room. After a few minutes, it transpired that the object of the meeting was to consider the best way of promoting the very modest enterprise of studying what might be made of the Congo River and its basin. This body of gentlemen desired to know how much of the Congo River was actually navigable by light-draught vessels. What protection could friendly native chiefs give to commercial enterprises? Were the tribes along the Congo sufficiently intelligent to understand that it would be better for their interests to maintain a friendly intercourse with the whites than to restrict it? What tributes, taxes, or imports, if any, would be levied by the native chiefs for right of way through their country? What was the character of the produce which the natives would be able to exchange for European fabrics? Provided that in future a railway would be created to Stanley Pool from some point on the lower Congo, to what amount could this produce be furnished? Some of the above questions were answerable even then, others were not. It was therefore resolved that a fund should be subscribed to equip an expedition to obtain accurate information; the subscribers to the fund assume the name and title of “*Comité d’Etudes du Haut Congo*.””

(Stanley, H.M., *The Congo and the Founding of its Free State*, 1885)

H.M. STANLEY BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

"ON THE RETURN OF STANLEY from his great journey in 1878, he was met at Marseilles by a representative from the King of Belgium, who enrolled the famous traveller as an agent for his Association. The immediate task given to Stanley was to open up the Congo for trade, and to make such terms with the natives as would enable stations to be built and depots established. In 1879 Stanley was at work with characteristic energy. His own intentions were admirable. *"We shall require but mere contact,"* he wrote, *"to satisfy the natives that our intentions are pure and honourable, seeking their own good, materially and socially, more than our own interests. We go to spread what blessings arise from amiable and just intercourse with people who have been strangers to them."* Stanley was a hard man, but he was no hypocrite. What he said he undoubtedly meant. It is worth remarking, in view of the accounts of the laziness or stupidity of the natives given by King Leopold's apologists in order to justify their conduct towards them, that Stanley had the very highest opinion of their industry and commercial ability. The following extracts from his writings set this matter beyond all doubt: *"Bolobo is a great centre for the ivory and cam-wood powder trade, principally because its people are so enterprising."* Of Irebu – *"a Venice of the Congo"* - he says: *"These people were really acquainted with many lands and tribes on the Upper Congo. From Stanley Pool to Upoto, a distance of 600 miles, they knew every landing place on the river banks. All the ups and downs of savage life, all the profits and losses derived from barter, and all the diplomatic arts used by tactful savages, were as well known to them as the Roman alphabet to us... No wonder that all this commercial knowledge had left its traces on their faces; indeed, it is the same as in your own cities in Europe. Know you not the military man among you, the lawyer and the merchant, the banker, the artist, or the poet? It is the same in Africa, more especially on the Congo, where the people are so devoted to trade."* (...) The upper [Congo] reaches of the stream and of its great tributaries were known only to a few devoted missionaries and enterprising explorers. Grenfell and Bentley, of the Missions, with von Wissmann, the German, and the ever-energetic Stanley, were the pioneers who, during the few years which followed, opened up the great hinterland which was to be the scene of such atrocious events. But the work of the explorer had soon to be supplemented and extended by the soldier."

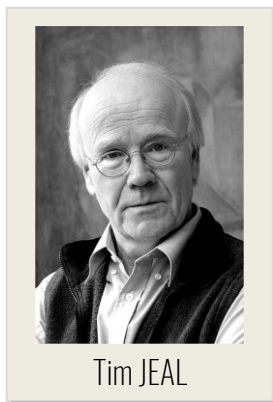
(Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Crime of the Congo*, 1909)

HENRY MORTON STANLEY: MORE HERO THAN COLONIALIST BRUTE

“A short, nuggety Welshman who died over a century ago has been haunting me these past few years, nagging my conscience, challenging my values and generally getting under my skin. We both did the same job once – writing about Africa for The Daily Telegraph – but a common career path is hardly a source of friction. My quandary is what to make of Henry Morton Stanley. In short, was he a hero or a brute? He might have stood a little over 5ft tall and had a tiny head (when I tried on his explorer’s hat at the Royal Geographical Society it perched on the back of my cranium like a kipka), but in the context of modern African history and, indeed, the entire European colonial project, Stanley was a colossus. His 1874-77 journeys, charting the Congo River, started the Scramble for Africa. Before Stanley, the white man had been largely content to nibble at the edges, staking little more than ports such as Freetown, Cape Town and Mombasa. After Stanley, the white man went inland. (...) Critics, who include a friend of mine and fellow patrons of a pro-Congo charity, have condemned the planned statue on the grounds that it “romanticises Victorian-era imperialists”. I disagree. The Stanley I got to know through the journey and research does not deserve to be denied a modest statue because of blanket sensitivity about colonialism. If such political correctness were to ban honours for anyone who supported colonialism, then we would have to burn the books of Kipling and cast down likenesses of Churchill. What makes Stanley a special case? After his first Congo journey, it is true that he did return as the colonial agent for the Belgian king, Leopold II. What Leopold then got up to in the Congo was at the darker end of the spectrum of colonial cruelty – his agents hacked hands off natives to encourage other to drive up harvesting of natural rubber, and they armed tribe against tribe. (...) But in all this, Stanley’s role was that of sorcerer’s apprentice. He might have created something that went on to do awful things, but that happened years after he left. Perhaps he deserves opprobrium for hoodwinking chiefs into ceding sovereignty. If that is the standard, then just about every early American president should be pilloried for conning native Americans out of their land. My time in the Congo did not teach me to hero-worship Stanley. But it did teach me respect for his vision, bloody-mindedness, loyalty to the African bearers that trekked with him from one side of Africa to the other, and his loathing of slavery by Arab raiders. These qualities, along with the monumental impact of what he achieved, surely deserve not to be forgotten.” (**Tim Butcher**, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world-news/africaandindianocean/congo/7966250/Henry-Morton-Stanley-was-more-hero-than-colonialist-brute.html>)

Chap III. H. M. STANLEY: The Greatest Explorer of Africa and Congo. Interview with Tim JEAL

TIM JEAL is the last Stanley's biographer. His books, '*Stanley: The Impossible Life of Africa's Greatest Explorer*' (Faber, 2007) and '*Explorers of the Nile: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Great Victorian Adventure*' (New Haven : Yale University Press) are the Bible for Henry Morton Stanley's life and achievements, especially because the author accessed to important archives that none of the former Stanley's biographers had read before. This interview is a long journey through Stanley's life, as some keep spreading negative assumptions and false allegations about Henry Morton Stanley's legacy.



How did the idea of writing Henry Morton Stanley's biography come to you?

In 1973, I published the life of David Livingstone and after that wanted to write about Stanley's life. I realised from some letters Stanley wrote to members of the Livingstone family that there was a more sensitive and complex side to his nature than had ever appeared in previous biographies. But another author, Richard Hall, had already started work, so I abandoned the idea. Years later, I wanted to try again, but by then, the Stanley family had sold most of Henry Morton Stanley's private papers to the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Brussels. For over twenty years, the museum would not let anyone see the letters. But the authorities changed their mind in 2002. When I started work at the museum, I was the first of Stanley's biographers to have had this marvellous opportunity.

What did you know about him before?

Only what I had read in the recent biographies struck me as writing in a vindictive and over-critical spirit. Only Richard Hall's book seemed balanced. But he had not seen more than a handful of Stanley's private correspondence.

What could we learn from his private papers about Stanley's childhood, birth, and relationship with his family and mother?

We could learn lots of things. For a start, how cruel and ungenerous his uncles were to him after his parents had abandoned him and after his much-loved grandfather had died. Also, how determined he was to get to know his mother. He even managed to get to know her well. She said she loved him, but he refused to believe her. But it meant a lot to him to stay under the same roof as her for the first time. We learn that he took her and his half-sister to London and Paris and paid for them. Though he was generous to his family, they tried to squeeze as much money out of him as they could as soon as he was famous. We also learn many things about his first important girlfriend, who became his fiancée.

How did he come to St Asaph's workhouse?

His uncles refused to pay for him to be boarded out in an ordinary home with a middle-aged Welsh couple. So, since they refused to pay, Stanley or John Rowlands had to go to the workhouse.

What was life there about, and how did he escape from there?

It was very hard. Families were split up when they arrived there. Boys were separated from girls (even brothers and sisters and husbands and wives). The food was very basic. Everyone wore a uniform. Everything was done to remind adults and children that they were being paid for by the state and should be ashamed of themselves. But the children were taught to read and write and do simple arithmetic. Stanley was a clever boy who did so well in his lessons that the master believed he could become a trainee schoolmaster when he left. This was what Stanley did very briefly when he left at the age of fifteen, after being in the workhouse for nine years.

How and why did he make the journey from Liverpool to New Orleans?

When Stanley left the workhouse, he went to a nearby school, where his cousin was headmaster. But he fell out with his cousin, and after working as a farm labourer on an aunt's farm, he went to Liverpool because another aunt lived there. In Liverpool, he worked as a butcher's boy, delivering meat to the docks. Seeing the big trans-Atlantic ships gave him the idea of emigrating to America.

How did he change his life in New Orleans, especially how he became a journalist?

He worked in New Orleans as a shop boy in a large wholesale store on the Mississippi River. Then he moved upriver, and when the Civil War began, he also became involved in the fighting. His first journalistic pieces were about his experiences in the war. They enabled him to get a job as a correspondent for a midwestern paper reporting on the wars against the Sioux and the Comanche.



Denbigh (North Wales, UK), March 17th 2011, representing the Congo: Joseph, Norbert & Alainfranke at H.M. Stanley new unveiling first statue in Britain.

And then he decided suddenly to change his name...

John Rowlands changed his name to Henry Morton Stanley soon after leaving New Orleans. He wanted to make a clean break from the poverty he had known as a child, from the parents who had abandoned him, and the shame of the workhouse.

Stanley is well known for his meeting with Dr Livingstone at Ujiji and his greeting, “Dr Livingstone, I presume!” How did he get this idea of travelling to Africa?

He had read books by Livingstone and Burton about their travels and realised that such books sold many copies. His brilliant idea was to realise that anyone who found Livingstone in central Africa (where he had seen no white man for four years) would become famous. It was risky because at this date, Europeans often died of malaria in Africa, but Stanley was prepared to take the risk to change his life.

What could we learn about this journey, and how was Stanley's behaviour with his caravan mates?

Stanley was so determined to succeed with his mission that he treated his two European companions without sympathy when they fell ill. But both men were heavy drinkers, and one chased after prostitutes, so Stanley (who did not drink and hated casual sex) left both men behind. One was left with the Arabs at Tabora, and the other was left with a chief, who was paid with cloth to look after him. Both men died, so Stanley was blamed later.

Back in London, he wrote his first book, "How I Found Livingstone". Why did this search for Livingstone become the Holy Grail of that time? Why was he finally sent to Africa?

The search for Livingstone was a great news story. The single man being found at the heart of a vast continent is like a needle in a haystack. Stanley could so easily have missed Livingstone. Also, Livingstone was a remarkable man who had taken great risks to expose the slave trade and tell the world about it. Stanley, by his bravery, helped this warrior against slavery and was influenced by him to return to Africa to try to finish Livingstone's geographical work (if Livingstone died before completing it).

And then he learned about the death of Livingstone, which would change his life...

Livingstone died in the swamps of Lake Bangweulu before discovering that he was close to the source of the Congo, rather than the source of the Nile. After Livingstone's African servants had carried his body to the coast, and it was buried in Westminster Abbey, Stanley persuaded the New York Herald and the Daily Telegraph to pay for him to finish Livingstone's work.

He was commissioned for the second journey in Africa. What did he achieve during this travel from East to West Africa?

When Stanley marched towards Lake Victoria at the start of his 1874-1877 trans-Africa journey, nobody knew where the River Lu-alaba, which Livingstone had traced north from Lake Bangweulu, went. Livingstone thought it was the Nile. But John Speke, who was the first European to have reached Lake Victoria, was sure this lake was the Nile's source. Richard Burton thought Lake Tanganyika was the source. So Stanley needed to sail around Lake Victoria to see whether Speke's river was the only one flowing out of it and to see whether it was one lake. Nobody knew for sure at this date. Then Stanley would need to sail around Lake Tanganyika and trace

any river flowing out of it. Then he would need to go to the Lualaba River and see where it went. Stanley did all these things and showed that Lake Tanganyika and Lake Bangweulu were part of the Congo's watershed. He also proved that the Lualaba was the Congo. So he had proved that Speke was right and Lake Victoria was the main reservoir of the Nile, and he had to travel 7,000 miles to prove all this. All three white companions died on the way: two from illness, one drowned. Also, half of his 228 African porters and guards died. His journey was the greatest piece of African exploration ever attempted and completed.

And then, his second book, *Through the Dark Continent*. But why did the British establishment not back the explorer after his return?



King Leopold II

Because Stanley, as a young man in America, had been expected by his editors, who sent him to cover the Red Indian wars, to include lots of dead Indians and scalping to sell their papers, he believed that he ought to send back similar stories and battles and shootings from Africa, so he invented many hostile encounters with Africans to sell his books and articles. After being abandoned by his parents, he was too insecure ever to admit that Africans had humiliated him, so he always pretended to have the better of them. He exaggerated

the bloodshed on his first visit to Bumbireh Island and did not explain why he had needed to launch a pre-emptive attack on the islanders several months later. He remained silent because he had been advised by close friends like his publisher and newspaper editor. All this damaged his reputation when he came back from his great trans-Africa journey, during which he solved all the great geographical mysteries of the central African watershed. He solved them by circumnavigating Lakes Victoria and Tanganyika and navigating the Congo, for the first time, from the heart of Africa to the Atlantic coast. Other explorers kept quiet about their fights with Africans, but Stanley, who had been a workhouse boy, did not know that he ought to have kept quiet, even though self-defence had been necessary. "We went into the heart of Africa self-invited, therein lies our fault,"

he wrote, ‘but it was not so grave that our lives when threatened should be forfeited.’



“Dr Livingstone, I presume?” Ujiji, Nov 10, 1871

Back again in Congo working for Leopold II, he signed treaties with Congolese traditional chiefs forcing them to give their lands to the King. Is that true?

It is not true. Stanley wanted the Congo to be an international trade area, not Leopold’s colony. His only treaties that exist do not require chiefs to grant sovereignty. They are more like leasehold agreements, enabling Stanley and his men to build and trade but to pay rent and not to own the land. I deal with this in detail in my Chapter “Who Stole the Congo?” On 11 August 1883, Stanley told Leopold that no Belgian officer was entitled to treat the Congolese as though they were conquered subjects ... that is all wrong. They are not subjects, but it is we who are tenants.”

What was the relationship between Stanley and Africans and other people he worked with?

When working in the Congo in the early 1880s, Stanley’s chief of staff was a Somali, Dualla, and two other African colleagues, Wadi Rehani and Mabruki Ndogo, were as close to Stanley as his two favourite Europeans on his staff. Stanley wrote: “I am prepared to admit any black man possessing the attributes of true manhood, or any good qualities, to my friendship, even to a brotherhood with myself.” Because Stanley was just to his Wangwana porters, they

volunteered repeatedly to travel with him – many came on three successive journeys. If he had been a brutal leader, they would not have served him again and again.

Where did the reputation of brutality in Stanley's behaviour, especially the drawing showing him trying to shoot one of the carriers carrying a box on his head, come from?

Stanley needed to seem strong, tough and invulnerable because of his terrible childhood. So he allowed some very stupid and impossible stories to get into his book "How I Found Livingstone". In one story, he claims that he warned a man carrying Livingstone's journals across a river that he would shoot him if he dropped them. Stanley would never have risked terrifying a man carrying such a precious box. The man would have become nervous, would have lost his concentration and stumbled on stones at the bottom of the river. Stanley would have encouraged him and calmed him. But he would never have scared him. Stanley harmed his reputation by wanting to seem masterful and strong.

What about Stanley's relationship with the young African boys he brought back to the United Kingdom?

Stanley paid for Kalulu to be educated at a private school in London and then took him on a lecture tour in America. The boy may have been lonely and have wanted the company of other children, but Stanley had freed him from slavery, so his life had not been marvellous in Africa. Baruti was Harry Johnston's servant, and Stanley could not get him to obey his rules in his London flat. He took him back to Africa after a month or two of quarrels.

What was the relationship between Stanley and his Welsh roots? Did he come back again to visit Wales?

Although Stanley's mother had rejected him and made no effort to see him during his ten years in the workhouse, Stanley forgave her and did his best to create a relationship with her. He succeeded and stayed with her on several occasions, took her to Paris and gave her presents. But she and her new husband tried to force Stanley to pay them a pension, and his brothers and cousins also exploited him and sold stories about him to newspapers. But despite their behaviour, he adopted the child of a penniless member of his Welsh family and brought him up as his own son. This was Denzil, whom Stanley adored and who gave him great happiness towards the end of his life. Thanks to Denzil, Stanley came to terms with his Welsh origins.

When and why did Stanley stop working for Leopold II?

Leopold decided not to send Stanley back to the Congo because he knew that Stanley refused to allow the Congolese to be exploited. The last straw for Stanley was Leopold's refusal to allow an international commission of inquiry to investigate the atrocities which happened ten years after Stanley had left the Congo. After this, he never saw Leopold again.

Is it true that Stanley fought 50 times and won all those battles? Were all of them as described in his own books and words, or is there a kind of exaggeration?

Almost all these hostile encounters in the Congo were very small incidents which Stanley exaggerated for journalistic reasons. In what he described as "the fight of fights", he doubled the number of Congolese war canoes in his descriptions. This was typical and sad because he really did not need to exaggerate to seem remarkable. I give all the details and references in my book.

What could be Stanley's legacy? What character could be portrayed as a model and make him special?

Stanley tells us today that, however poor you are and however deprived your childhood was, you can still have a dream and, by hard work, courage, and determination, achieve more than anyone could believe possible.

But he worked for Leopold II and had bloody hands as the King bloodily exploited the Congo.

All this happened ten years after Stanley left the Congo. He wrote to The Times expressing his disgust with what had happened. He went to see Leopold in person to express his feelings. That was why Leopold would never see him again.

Died in 1904, the year Morel established his Congo Reform Association. What was Henry Morton Stanley's attitude when he learned about King's atrocities in Congo?

By 1900, Henry Morton Stanley was a very sick man. He was far too ill to get involved with Edmund Dene Morel's campaign.

What could Stanley's plan be for the Congo and the Congolese, and how is it known now?

Stanley would have liked the Congo to remain an international trading river. That was his aim when he first went out there. He did not want to create a huge colony for Leopold. But the French tried to make it their colony, and then the Arabs brought the slave trade

down the river, so in the end, Henry Morton Stanley backed Leopold to create a colony. But he never knew what terrible plans Leopold had. So what happened in the end is very sad. Leopold fooled a lot of people, including Stanley.

Why do you subtitle your book *The Greatest Explorer? Do you think that Stanley is the greatest one?*

He is the greatest white explorer who ever went to Africa, in my opinion. Though Livingstone and Speke were great explorers, too.

Why was Stanley not welcome by the establishment on his return to the UK after his first African journey?

This was because the Royal Geographical Society had sent its own expedition to find Livingstone. So they were furious that Stanley (an American, as they thought him to be) had got to Livingstone first. British newspapers also resented the fact that Stanley gave his scoop to the New York Herald.



David Livingstone, the pioneer
and the Master

What was his position when going to the Berlin Conference?

He was an adviser to the US delegation. Leopold had refused to invite him to join his delegation.

Why did most of the biographers and those who wrote about Stanley get bad press and negative attitudes about him, describing him as brutal and racist, even mixing him with the bloodiest King business in Congo?

Richard Hall did not describe Henry Morton Stanley as brutal. But Frank McLynn and John Bierman

did. I think if they had been given access to the papers in Brussels, they would have depicted Stanley as being a much more humane man than they gave him credit for. Only by reading letters, diaries and other documents in Brussels did I come to the conclusions I did. I never set out to defend Stanley but to tell the truth.

What about Adam Hochschild, the *Holy Bible* about the Leopold II atrocities in Congo, have you ever had contact with him?

I wrote to him and sent the new facts about Stanley's treaties. Hochschild said in an email to me that he could now see that

Stanley's relationship with Leopold was more complicated than he had thought. He said he would include changes in the next printing of his book to include what I had said about Stanley's treaties not taking the land from the chiefs.

One of the famous books about the Congo atrocities is Conrad's Heart of the Darkness. Most think that Mr. Kurtz described could be H. M. Stanley...

That is rubbish. He was a Belgian called Rom. I dealt with this, too, in my book.

What could the young generation of Welsh and Congolese learn and take from Stanley's life and legacy?

Always make up your own mind about people and never believe stereotypes. The truth is always complicated. Stanley loved the Congo and the Congolese and wanted the people of the country to prosper. He is part of Congo's history, and without him, there would have been no Congo state as we know it, for better or worse. Stanley could not control Leopold and was sacked by him. If he had been sent back there, the atrocities would not have happened.

Thank you very much for your time!

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'Mr Stanley I presume'

The great unveiling of the HM Stanley statue outside Denbigh Library...

by SHAUN DAVIES

SCORES of people have lined-up to shake the hand of Denbigh's most famous son.

While the weather may have been overcast and gloomy, the anticipation and atmosphere was one of excitement as a large crowd congregated for the unveiling of the town's H M Stanley statue.

The build-up to the big day had been one marked by controversy.

Last autumn, councillors voted to erect the sculpture commemorating the controversial Victorian explorer.

At that time, planners recommended that Denbighshire County Council expense the £1,000 statue in Denbigh and councillors agreed, to vote in favour of the recommendation.

There has been opposition from critics who claim Stanley was guilty of imperialism, crimes against humanity and aiding slavery.

They were collected by Bangor University lecturer Dafydd Williams and published in a letter which stated: "We ask the people of Denbighshire and of Wales to make sure that it (the statue) is never erected."

In giving the statue the green light, Denbighshire County Council said there has been local consent for a sculpture.

NORBERT Mbumputu of the Congo-Wales Friendship Circle greets the new statue of Henry Morton Stanley

"DR. LIVINGSTONE, I PRESUME?"

"WE ARE NOW ABOUT three hundred yards from the village of Ujiji, and the crowds are dense about me. Suddenly I heard a voice on my right say, 'Good morning, sir!'"

Startled at hearing this greeting in the midst of such a crowd of black people, I turn sharply around in search of the man, and see him at my side, with the blackest of faces, but animated and joyous, - a man dressed in a long white shirt, with a turban of American sheeting around his woolly head, and I ask, 'Who the mischief are you?'

'I am Susi, the servant of Dr Livingstone,' said he, smiling, and showing a gleaming row of teeth.

'What! Is Dr Livingstone here?' 'Yes, Sir.'

'In this village?'

'Yes, Sir'

'Are you sure?'

'Sure, sure, Sir. Why, I leave him just now.'

In the meantime, the head of the expedition had halted, and Selim said to me: 'I see the Doctor, Sir. Oh, what an old man! He has got a white beard.' My heart beats fast, but I must not let my face betray my emotions, lest it shall detract from the dignity of a white man appearing under such extraordinary circumstances.

So I did that which I thought was most dignified. I pushed back the crowds, and, passing from the rear, walked down a living avenue of people until I came in front of the semicircle of Arabs, in the front of which stood the white man with the grey beard. As I advanced slowly toward him I noticed he was pale, looked wearied, had a grey beard, wore a bluish cap with a faded gold band around it, and had on a red-sleeved waistcoat and a pair of grey tweed trousers. I would have run to him, only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob, - would have embraced him, only, he being an Englishman, I did not know how he would receive me; so I did what cowardice and false pride suggested was the best thing, - walked deliberately to him, took off my hat, and said, 'Dr Livingstone, I presume?'

'Yes,' said he, with a kind smile, lifting his cap slightly.

I replace my hat on my head and he puts on his cap, and we both grasp hands, and I then say aloud, 'I thank God, Doctor, I have been permitted to see you.'

He answered, 'I feel thankful that I am here to welcome you.'
(...)

“DR. LIVINGSTONE, I PRESUME?”

(...) Conversation began. What about? I declare I have forgotten. Oh! we mutually asked questions of one another, such as: ‘How did you come here?’ and ‘Where have you been all this long time? - the world has believed you to be dead.’ Yes, that was the way it began; but whatever the Doctor informed me, and that which I communicated to him, I cannot correctly report, for I found myself gazing at him, conning the wonderful man at whose side I now sat in Central Africa. Every hair of his head and beard, every wrinkle of his face, the wanes of his features, and the slightly wearied look he wore, were all imparting intelligence to me, - the knowledge I craved for so much ever since I heard the words, ‘Take what you want, but find Livingstone.’ (...)

He asked me to tell him the news. ‘No, Doctor,’ said I, ‘read your letters first, which I am sure you must be impatient to read.’

‘Ah,’ said he, ‘I have waited years for letters, and I have been taught patience. I can surely afford to wait a few hours longer. No, tell me the general news. How is the world getting along?’”

H. M. STANLEY, *How I Found Livingstone*.

THE AFRICAN EXPLORERS: BOMBAY AFRICANS

The Royal Geographical Society held an exhibition and organised a workshop about the so-called “Bombay Africans”. Victorian explorers usually used Africans as carriers, interpreters, and disciples. Most of them knew writing and reading and were from a Bombay orphanage in India set up by missionaries. When back in Africa and as some very clever polyglots, they became Victorian explorers’ advisers and disciples. They are known as the “Bombay Africans”. They assisted explorers with their powerful diplomacy and negotiation skills as they spoke many African languages and knew African hinterland roads. The most famous of them were **Sidi Mubarak Bombay, Abdullah Susi, James Chuma, Wikitani, Matthew Wellington, and Jacob Wainwright**. Livingstone and Stanley used them as disciples and interpreters; they are also explorers and need to be praised. Kinshasa, for example, has three founders: Stanley, who founded the Leopoldville post in 1881, and his English agents Swinburne and African Abdullah Susi (born in Chupanga in Mozambique), a tireless traveller, fine negotiator, and former disciple of Livingstone, speaking several languages, having placed their camp near Kinsasa, a weekly market village, not far from Ngobila Beach, a large ivory merchant. On returning from Europe, Stanley signed the treaty his agents previously negotiated with Chief Nchuvila (or Ntsuvila) and founded, in June 1882, the new post of Kinsasa.

Chap IV. Rev HUGHES, The Congo Boys, The Congo & African Institute (1891-1912) and Beyond. Interview with Norbert MBU-MPUTU

***T**HE WONDERFUL story of a Welsh pastor with a revolutionary vision about Africa and Africans during those first years of the colonisation. Reverend William Hughes believed that Africans educated and taught in the West were more willing to become changemakers when they returned to their communities than*



Kinkasa, Rev. Hughes and Nkanza

Europeans changing Africa. Unfortunately, after some years, his “Congo and Africa Institute of Wales” closed down; he finished his life in bankruptcy and died anonymously. The story is now told in two interesting books by Draper, C. & Lawson-Reay, J. and Robert Burroughs.

Who was Reverend Pastor Hughes?

The Baptist Missionary Society pastor, William Hughes, was born on 8 April 1856 at a remote seventeenth-century longhouse farm, Tu Hwnt I'r Afon farm, at Rhoslan, near Criccieth. Trained as a minister

at Llangollen Baptist College in 1882, the Baptist Missionary Society accepted him for service in the Congo. By that time, like other Gospel preachers, he was inspired by the life of Dr David Livingstone and his devotion to Africa. As a young man, he attended, in 1785, a lecture on David Livingstone at the Poets' Chapel in

Cricieth-Porthmadog, north of his native Wales. He also learnt about Henry Morton Stanley's expedition into Africa searching for the lost old missionary. Hughes decided to follow in their footsteps and travel to Africa to teach the Gospels. After the necessary training and courses, he left Wales in August 1882. He reached Africa in September, where he was sent to serve at the station of Vunda or Bayneston, not far from Palabala, a village near Matadi, in Congo. He lived for three years before being struck down by a high fever at a time when tropical diseases had already sent several missionaries to their graves. Treated by the surgeon of the one who became his friend, as both were Welsh, Henry Morton Stanley's surgeon, the diagnosis was that William Hughes could not adapt to the tropical climate. On the advice of Stanley and his doctor, he had no choice but to leave the Congo and return to Europe.

What did he do after?

Pastor William Hughes didn't return home alone. He disembarked in Liverpool in September 1885 and settled at Colwyn Bay (North Wales) with the two black Congolese boys he brought with him: Kinkasa and Nkanza, from the Lower Congo, near the village of Palabala. It is said that Kinkasa, the first boy to be adopted by the Pastor, nursed him not only during his last sickness but also for most of his illnesses whilst in Africa. For the second boy, a traditional chief brought him to Hughes. He was very sick when he came to him and had his feet afflicted by the small parasitic worms



Myrtle Villa, Nant y Glyn Road, Colwyn Bay, location of the Congo & African Institute in that time and now



known as ‘jiggers’. He could hardly walk. The Pastor washed his feet and began extracting the worms from his flesh. It was only after eighteen months of living with the Pastor that he knew the truth about Nkanza. He and his mother were both slaves owned by the chief. At the request of Nkanza’s mother, the Pastor freed the boy by paying some tribute to the chief and the deal was made. But, as he was almost dying when back in Wales, William Hughes had another idea behind: after experiencing the difficulties of foreigners, especially Europeans, and to accommodate the African environment, culture, language and tropical diseases, he believed that it could be better for Africans and Congolese to be brought to Europe and the West. They then needed to be trained in teaching the Gospels and also in modern jobs and activities so that, when back in Africa, they would become the change makers for their own people, communities and countries. He believed that Wales was the best place, as the warm environment would not make the students miss their Africa back home. In 1892, Hughes published a book, *Dark Africa and the Way Out*, to tell his vision.

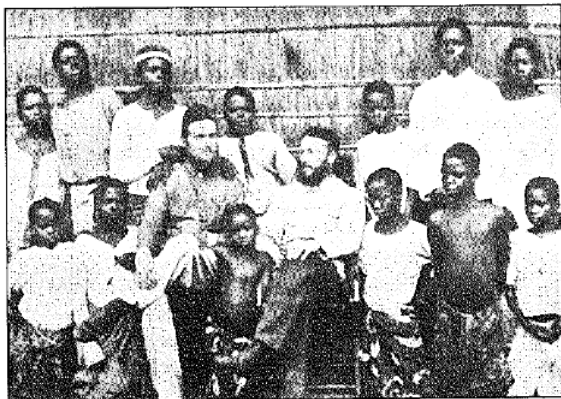
What happened to the first two Congo Boys?

First, the Pastor needed to struggle with his Baptist Missionary Society hierarchy, as they refused to accept his resignation. It was not until 1886 that William and his fiancée, Katie Jones, were given a medical examination and pronounced unfit to serve in Africa. In June 1887, he was appointed pastor of Llanellian Baptist church. The family took up residence on Bay View Road and started calling their home the Congo House. In April 1890, he took over a house on Nant-y-Glyn Road, named it the Congo Institute and struggled with his scheme. As he did not receive any support, he started raising money with the two boys he schooled at local schools and quickly and perfectly learned Welsh and English. The Pastor printed postcards with photos of the three of them and started singing gospels, with the pastor, in Welsh, English and their native tongue, travelling from Cardiff to Wrexham. They became famous.

What happened then?

Pastor William Hughes launched his Congo House in 1887 at Colwyn Bay. However, on April 4, 1890, he officially established the Congo Training Institute by holding the first Congo House Institute Committee meeting. They moved to the new building in 1890. The first Congo Boys, famously known also as the “Congo Boys of Cardiff”, the capital of Wales, were joined by a third boy and then by

others from the Congo. The students attended the Tabernacle Welsh Baptist Chapel in Colwyn Bay and Calfaria Welsh Baptist Chapel in Old Colwyn. Hughes also passed an agreement with the Liverpool shipping company Elder Dumpster, already in business with King Leopold II for shipping goods and articles to and from the Congo, so that students could be transported free of charge from Africa to Liverpool and vice versa.



William Hughes' Mission School, Vunda (Bayneston), Congo, 1883

What were they learning then?

The boys and girls brought to Colwyn Bay were trained for five years in craft apprenticeships, such as carpentry, printing, tailoring, and blacksmithing, so that they could deliver those skills learned not only as missionaries and Gospel disciples but also as change makers upon return to their own country. Pastor Hughes was convinced that Africans should be able to worship in their mother tongues and have full control over their own affairs and resources. They needed, of course, to be trained and trained enough for that purpose. In 1891, the Institute received big financial support from H. M. Stanley: he lectured on June 14th in Caernarfon Castle in front of 4,000 people, and the money was donated to the Institute. The following month, the Institute also received the patronage of King Leopold II of Belgium at the request of H. M. Stanley.

How did the institute then develop?

As the interest in teaching the Gospel in Africa increased, and as many British pastors started settling in other African countries,

young people were recruited from other African areas like Sierra Leone, South Africa, Botswana, Grenada (West Indies), Bahamas, Chattanooga, Tennessee, Cameroon, Namibia, Ghana, Nigeria, Angola, and Liberia. The Institute changed its original name to become the “African Training Institute of Wales”, especially after Hughes’s West Africa tour in 1893 and the publication in 1892 of his book, *Dark Africa: and the Way Out. A Scheme for civilising and evangelising the Dark Continent*, (London, Sampson Low, Marston & Company Ltd, 1892). Among the students were two daughters of Dutch and Congolese parents, Ernestina Francis and Lulu Coote. In 1896-1897, there were 11 students, including one American, Paul Daniels, from Charleston, South Carolina. He was still there in 1897-98, with 18 others, and some of them started to study a more academic curriculum, including Greek, Latin, mathematics and geography. Apart from English and Welsh, there were at least seven African languages spoken in the institute. Amongst the students were also the first Africans to be knighted by the Queen: Sir Samuel Lewis of Sierra Leone, the pioneering Nigerian churchman Mojola Agbebi, the Jamaica-born author Dr T. E. S. Scholes, and Mr I. McPherson, one of the most successful collectors for the Institute. One of the famous couples who lived in the Institute was Joseph and Ernestina Morford. Ernestina arrived at the Institute in 1891, when she was eight years old, and she married Joseph Morford, a black missionary from Tennessee who was also visiting the Institute. They were married in Africa and, for eight years, ran schools in Nigeria. Some of the students were given opportunities to study abroad: Kwesi Quainoo and Ashmael Pratt studied medicine at Edinburgh University; Ayobi Oyejola graduated in medicine in 1906; Akinsanya Oluwale qualified as a medical officer at Liverpool; one Nigerian became a carpenter and another the director of education.

How was their life in the institute?

Those students, boys and girls, enjoyed meeting Britons from all walks of life at Institute garden parties, at work, or as guests in local homes. After some years, the Institute started sending back some students. Daniel, trained as a carpenter, was the first student to be returned to Africa in July 1890. Unfortunately, the Institute started getting more and more criticism from some people who did not like the scheme. Much of that criticism was because the Institute was not founded by a society but by an individual.

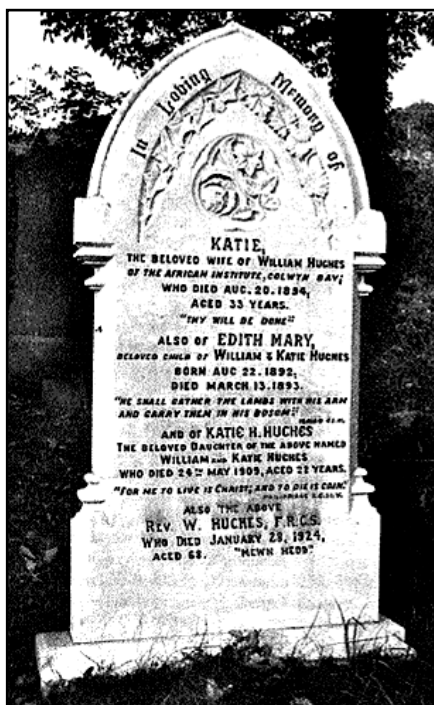
And death... The first to die from this institute xxx

Estimated at 12 years old, Kinkasa (DRC) died of sleeping sickness in May 1892, after ailing for a year and a half, but, according to the Pastor, the disease had been lurking in his body long before he came to Wales. Samba (DRC), probably 14, died after a fall in March 1892; Nkanza (DRC) died of heart failure caused by congestion of the liver in April 1892, at an estimated age of 16; Joseph Emmanuel Abraham, AKA Kobina Boodo (Gold Coast), died in 1909, aged 21, and Ernestina Morford (DRC), aged 30, in January 1914, when she was visiting the Institute on holiday. They were all buried in the old city cemetery, where their graves can still be seen and visited today. I got the opportunity to visit those graves in the old cemetery. The Pastor also got through difficult times: between 1893 and 1918, his wife and three of his daughters died. His daughter, Claudia, who died aged 30 in December 1918, was buried in the same grave as Ernestina. That could explain the rumour spreading in Colwyn Bay at that time that Ernestina was Hughes's illegitimate daughter. The pastor remarried, but his second wife left him only a few weeks after the marriage. Hughes planned to travel again

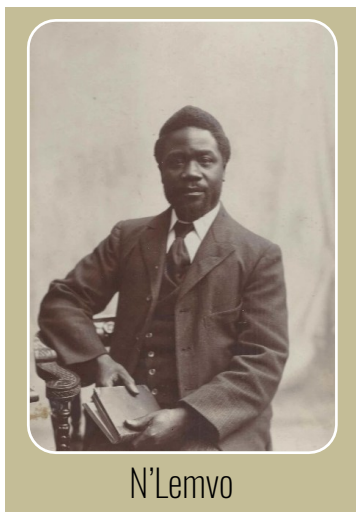
to West Africa to find new missionary stations, unfortunately, WWI prevented him from travelling as the Germans bombarded any sailing ship. He was no longer supported by Baptist pastors and people of Colwyn Bay. He and the Institute experienced difficult financial situations at that time.

Was it Reverend Hughes's solitary initiative to bring Congolese and African children to study in Europe and return them home?

No. Missionaries often brought young people from Africa and the Congo to



Europe. One of those pioneers among Catholics was Abbé Van Impe, director of Gijzen's Institut St Louis de Gonzague in Belgium, who brought Congolese children to Belgium in 1888 to study at his school. The first Congolese known brought to England were surely two boys, N'dambi and Pukamoni and a young girl, Lauda, the daughter of Pala-Bala chief, brought by the LIM Craven back in England in summer 1881 with his wife he also brought in Congo. They all stayed at Harley College, where the two boys were Christiansted before returning in Congo, Lauda tragically died after back from England. The first Protestant missionary in the Congo was Dr David Livingstone, who reached Nyangwe, eastern Congo, and Reverends George Grenfell and Thomas J. Comber of the Baptist Missionary Society, BMS, became the first English missionaries to reach the West of Congo. With the financial support of two English donors, R. Arthington and Charles Wathen, they landed at Banana on 24 January 1878 from the Protestant mission in Cameroon. They were reinforced by Henry Edmund Crudgington, Dr William Holman Bentley, Thomas and Minnie Comber, and John S. Hartland, who arrived in the Congo in 1879 and settled in San Salvador. In January 1881, Bentley and Crudgington became the first Protestant missionaries to



N'Lemvo

visit Stanley Pool, now Kinshasa, and Bentley settled later in the parish he founded of Ngombe-Lutete, having taken as his assistant, Mantu Dundulu (Ndonzoao) N'lemvo, whom he brought from San Salvador and from the village of Lemvo on the right bank of the mouth of the Congo River (c. 1865 in Pawa, near San Salvador, in Angola, + Kivianga, February 1938) in 1884. On 29 April 1881, a Catholic missionary brought N'Lemvo to the BMS Dr W. Holman Bentley, for whom he became a collaborator and interpreter, and Bentley changed his

name to N'Lemvo, after his home village. Converted to Christianity on 30 April 1882, he was baptised on 19 February 1888 at Ngombe-Lutete. Having helped Bentley to write *'Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language'*, Bentley brought him three times to England:

he accompanied Bentley to England, where they arrived on 23 March 1884, and, with eight other Congolese who came later, they crossed the Channel, and King Leopold II welcomed them in the Belgian Royal Palace. When he returned to Congo, he married and settled in his new Christian village of Kivianga, near Ngombe-Lutete, helping Bentley in translating the Bible into Kikongo. He again visited England (April 1892-September 1893) and helped Bentley to publish, in London in 1887, the *Dictionary and Grammar of the Kongo Language as spoken at San Salvador, the Ancient Capital of the Old Kongo Empire*, and the translation of the New Testament into Kikongo entitled *Nkand'a Nzambi* that Bentley completed when he spent 1892-93's furlough in Sudbury at the house in Friars Street, now Bentley House, with his Congolese assistant N'Lemvo. For the third time, he returned to England in 1904, where he was invited to speak about the Church in Congo at the Baptist Congress at Exeter Hall in 1905; he returned to Congo in 1907 and contributed to the translation of many books of the Bible in Kikongo and wrote his autobiography, 'Mpungwilu'. He died in February 1938. And then arrived in Congo the Livingstone Inland Mission, LIM, which the first missionaries, the English Henry Craven from Liverpool joined by the Dane sailor Strom, reached Matadi in February 1878 and moved to found Pala-Bala the same year. When Strom returned to Europe, he was replaced by James Telford and Johnson. And, led by Rev John McKittrick, the Congo Balolo Mission, CBM, first missionaries left England in April 1889 and reached Matadi in August 1889, from where they trekked upstream to Stanley Pool to start up the new stations in Equateur, in the region of the tributary rivers of the Congo River: Lulonga, Maringa, Lopori, Ikelemba and Tshuapa and established their missions at the villages of Bonginda, Lulonga, Ikau, Baringa, Mompono, Yuli, Yoseki and Bongandanga.

What about Disasi Makulo?

Another famous first Congolese Protestant Christian was Disasi Makulo. He was nine years old when he and other children were kidnapped by the slave trader Tippu Tip and taken to Stanley Falls station, now Kisangani, founded in 1883 by Henry Morton Stanley. To the surprise of the children, the latter came in fact to buy them back from Tippu Tip and offered them for study at the various stations he had founded on the river. Disasi and his friend, the last two, who arrived with Stanley at his Leopoldville station, were

handed over to Stanley's assistant, Swinburne. Once Stanley left for Europe, Swinburne stayed with young Disasi, and as Leopold II did not renew his contract, Swinburne returned to England in 1886 with his two sons, one of whom was Disasi Makulo. The same year, he returned to the Congo with them as she decided to shift into the ivory business, which he bought in industrial quantities. Having met Stanley again in Leopoldville during the latter's expedition to find Emin Pasha, he lent him his steamer, and, in 1889, Swinburne fell ill, and Disasi and his friend carried him on a hammock to Boma. At the Ngombe-Lutete station, missionary George Grenfell took charge of him for a fortnight, but alas, he died in Boma, and the 18-year-old Disasi was taken in by George Grenfell, who made him a disciple, baptised him, and arranged for him to travel back home to preach the gospel. It was here that George Grenfell died in Basoko in 1906.

Are there other famous stories to remember?

Also, among the British women who lived in the Congo was Edith Rebecca Millman, who lived in Province Orientale from 1893 to 1937, initially with her husband, Walter Stapleton, a Baptist missionary. When he died in 1906, she married another British missionary, William Millman, known as 'Mokili'. Her granddaughters published her letters: Edith Rebecca Millman & Jane Marshall, *Mama Edith: Letters from Congo*. Volume 1, 2012, and Jane Marshall & James Butterworth, *Mokili in Congo. A Biography of William Millman and the Yakusu Mission. Mission and Tradition in the Congo*. She wrote, for example, in July 1913: *'Dear brothers and friends, you asked me to tell you all the things I have seen and experienced since the first days of my arrival in Africa. Well, I've been here for twenty years, but the colours of my first impressions don't seem to have faded; they're still as vivid as they were when I first arrived. How quickly the years go by!'* When Edith returned to England on holiday in 1896, she also brought her maid, Salamo Lifoka, and they returned in 1897. But what made Hughes and his institute so special was that he brought young people from Africa, who stayed for a few years before returning home. Management, organisation, logistics, and difficult communications require real charisma and vision, a prerogative of rare men, as Hughes proved to be, considering those years' difficulties of communications and travel.

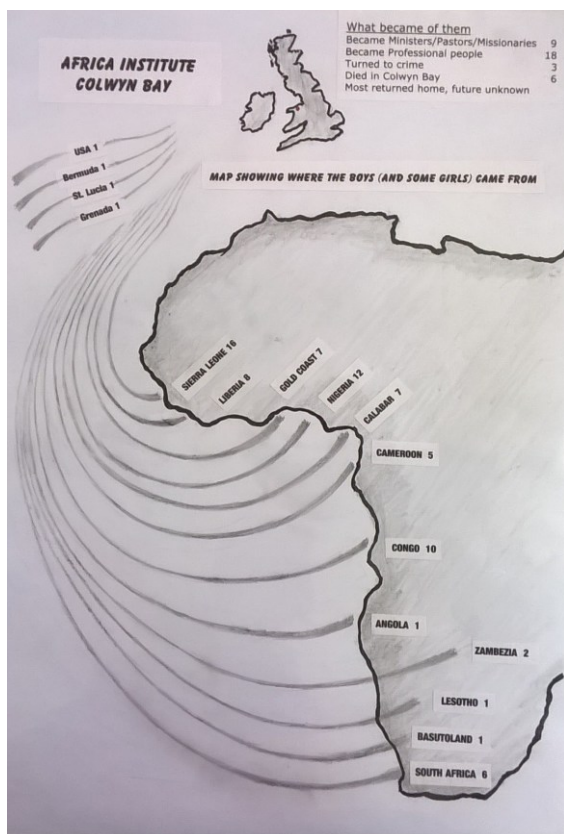
And, an alleged scandal happened in the Institute?

Not really, but you know the press... An article in a newspaper caused big damage to the Institute and the pastor. On June 10th 1911,

the African Institute's last annual report was published. As Christmas 1911 approached, the newspaper talked about the scandal of a local, unmarried black boy who fathered a "Brown Baby" with a white girl. The Pastor challenged the article and, despite the two articles in the newspaper and the truth that the father of the child was not a member of the Institute but an actor named John Lionel Franklin, the damage had already been caused as most of Pastor Hughes's friends and supporters of the Institute lost confidence in him. In fact, in the British society of that period, the marriage of a black man to a white woman was forbidden and considered obscene. The Institute closed on 21st March 1912. A week before, on 14th March, Hughes was declared bankrupt, having amassed a debt of £4,932. He told the court: "The attacks in John Bull killed the Institute, and the Institute killed me." Hughes made the worst mistake of his life by initiating legal proceedings for libel against Horatio Bottomley, the owner of the John Bull newspaper, and lost the case. The trial destroyed him, and he experienced ignominy and degradation during his last days. In 1917 and 1918, he finally considered moving to Cameroon and appealing for support from the people of Colwyn Bay. However, after receiving official recognition from the local authorities for his work in Africa, WWI did not allow him to return to Africa. In 1918, his daughter Claudia died; he remained with only one boy, Stanley, born at the Congo Institute in August 1890 and named after Hughes's great hero and friend, Henry Morton Stanley. Abandoned and financially ruined, Reverend William Hughes started drinking as a means of escape; he was admitted to Penrhyndeudraeth Workhouse and later transferred to the poorhouse, 12 Waen Terrace, at Conwy, where he finally died of heart disease on 28 January 1924.

What is the Congo and the African Institute's legacy?

Let's say that it was in the Colwyn Bay African Training Institute of Wales that Pan-Africanism was first launched and boosted in the world as, for the first time, Africans from different countries lived and studied together, certainly dealing with African issues and contributing with African solutions in the Western and Welsh community they were part of. Pastor Hughes' Pan-Africanism influenced the first African politicians who played a significant role during the independence years of their countries, such as Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), and Hastings Banda (Malawi). Finally, 87 students were trained at the institute during the



22 years of its existence. Most were from Africa, but others came from across the Atlantic: Angola 1, Bermuda 1, Cameroon 5, Congo 12, Grenada 1, Equatorial Guinea 1, Ghana 15, Lesotho 2, Liberia 8, Nigeria 19, Sierra Leone 16, South Africa 5, St Lucia 1, USA 2, Zambia 2.

What about the archives of the Institute?

The Archives of the Institute are now at Bangor University archives centre, and

the building used for the institute and pastor Hughes' church, used by students, can still be visited in Colwyn Bay. Hughes's dream was damaged and destroyed not just by the mismanagement, misfortune and lack of support but also by the racism of the newspaper owner and some inhabitants of Colwyn Bay. Hughes's contribution to developing and empowering Black Africans continued for decades, as his students worked back in Africa with their own people. Part of his legacy was the independent Baptist church of the once-German Cameroon, led by Africans themselves trained and educated in Colwyn Bay Institute. Hughes could be recognised as a man of great achievement. After the foundation of the Liberian Republic in 1847, Pastor Hughes and his Congo and African Institute could be seen as leaders of Pan-Africanism and Nationalism by students who lived in the Institute as inquisitive visitors or resident students, including Mojola Agbebi, Edward Blyden, and President Joseph J. Cheeseman.

Reverend Hughes was made a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and in 1908, he was the Honorary Secretary of the Welsh National Eisteddfod. In his last letter to his friends, those who especially supported his incredible idea of the Congo and African Institute, Pastor William Hughes wrote: ***“Do not forget to remember me”***.

What did the students bring to Colwyn Bay?

Their 30 mother tongues made Colwyn Bay become the most culturally diverse place in the world by those years; those African students brought their culture and their songs, and entertainment. Also, as those students were recruited by their country of birth, Colwyn Bay could be seen as the pioneer of African independence, as those countries, by those years, did not yet legally exist.

What did the students learn from Colwyn Bay?

They learned to speak English and Welsh, experienced Welshness and Britishness, religion, garden parties, cricket matches, concerts & entertainments (August 1898 African-American Fisk University Jubilee Singers, performing negro-spirituals in Colwyn Bay’s Public Hall), fundraising, history, tailoring, carpentering, printing, masonry for them to be able to build churches when back homes. They also learned to live with other Africans and their cultures and languages. Two black students, Frederick Loudin and Thomas Lewis Johnson, would play leading roles in the 1900 Pan-African Conference in London. In 1904, four students founded the Ethiopian Progressive Association (EPA) in Liverpool.



Mrs. Rita Davies from Old Colwyn Bay, holding a copy of the first project book in which she is portrayed as the one who knew and told the graves location story.

The students received a broad range of training at the Institute, from a standard school education at the Institute itself through to apprenticeships in the community. The Institute became a model of excellence for Africa. A Colwyn Bay newspaper reported that: *“Mr Hughes has planted a fruitful idea...already the Bishop of Sierra Leone has established a technical school on Africa’s soil for the benefit of [its people.]”* Most students stayed in Colwyn Bay for

three years before returning to their homelands, while others went to study for further qualifications elsewhere in the UK. After leaving the Institute, Ladipo Oluwole from Lagos studied medicine at the University of Glasgow before returning to Africa, where he was responsible for setting public health standards in Nigeria. Twenty per cent of the students went into professional occupations, such as law, teaching and medicine, and a further 10% became highly educated preachers and pastors. Others returned to work within their own communities in trades and businesses.

What about the link between the institute and Mandela?

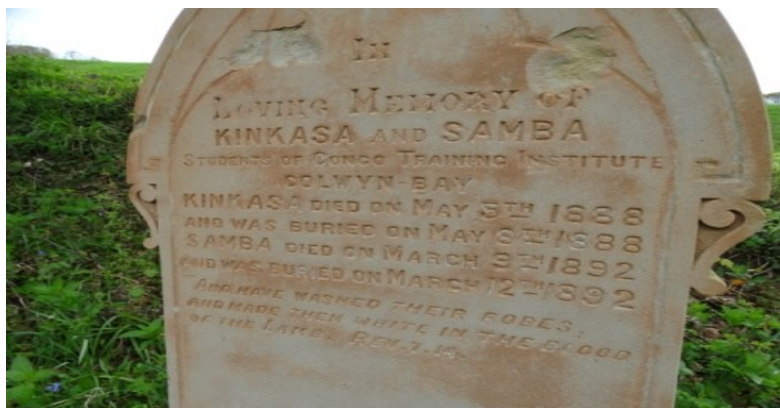
Nelson Mandela had a unique link with Colwyn Bay. He was heavily influenced by probably the most influential student of the African Institute: Davidson Don Tengo Jabavu, who proved to be a star pupil from 1903-1906 and who went on to gain a BA in English at University College London in 1912 and a Diploma in teaching at Birmingham University in 1914. When he returned home, he founded the hugely influential South African Native College at Fort Hare, Cape Province, and one of his students, Nelson Mandela, declared: "Fort Hare and Professor DDT Jabavu are virtually synonymous." David Jabavu organised groups defending African rights in the 1920s and, in 1935, became the All-African Convention president, a position held until 1948, the start of the African National Congress (ANC).



Are there records of those who returned?

They remained in touch with Pastor Hughes and the institute, which published, in its newsletters, most of their letters. Bangor University still keeps them in its archives. For example, returned in November 1906 to Sierra Leone after have been trained as a printer at Colwyn Bay, William Lukobi-Johnson started running a Sunday school and a small print department in Freetown; in 1900, Joseph Morford (USA) gained Second Class teaching certificate with Honours, left in 1904, went in Nigeria, kept in touch with Reverend Hughes and was appointed head teacher in his community; DR Ishmael Charles Pratt, Sierra Leone, arrived at Colwyn Bay in 1899 and remained one

of the Institute's longest-serving and most accomplished students, as he passed in 1903 the Medical Preliminary Examination; Dr Lapido Oluwole went on to study medicine and established public health standards in Nigeria; Dr Ayodeji Oyejola headed the first hospital in Yorubaland on his return.



Was it a dream or the solitary project of one man, Hughes?

No. There had been a flow of educational migrants from Africa to Britain and Europe in the nineteenth century, sponsored by Catholic and Protestant missionaries. Hughes pointed to the story of the Yoruba Samuel Ajayi Crowther, a child rescued by HMS Myrmidon and educated in Sierra Leone and Britain before returning to Africa as a pioneering missionary, and later became the first Black bishop of the Church of England. Educational migration was also common in the Congo Free State. For example, the Catholic White Fathers established the *Institut des Jeunes Noirs* in Malta in 1881, which received at least five pupils from the Congo and more from other African territories. Boys and girls also arrived at Abbot Van Impe's *Institut St. Louis de Gonzague* in eastern Flanders (Belgium) between 1888 and 1900. In Britain⁸⁶, missionaries, including individuals known to Hughes, brought their young charges from the Congo to Europe in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Further afield, Congo-born

⁸⁶ Burroughs, R, *Imperial Entanglements of the Congo/African Institute, Colwyn Bay, Wales (1889–1911)*, https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/258/oa_edited_volume/chapter/3265879, visited on 23 June 2024.

students were enrolled in institutions created for African American education. A handful of young male intakes at Wayland Seminary, Washington, corresponded with the students at Congo House, while in Atlanta, Georgia, Spelman Seminary received young women sent by the American Baptist Missionary Union. The first Congolese universities adopted the same vision of educating children.

The first Congolese universities !...

In the run-up to Congo's independence, two views opposed the Jesuits to the Scheutists Catholic Fathers, whether young Congolese to study only in the Congo, where the best schools and universities must be built, or also in Europe to experience life in the West and taste an international environment. Thomas Kanza, Justin Bomboko, Andre Mandy, Andre Boboliko, Jonas Mukamba, Marcel Lihau, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, etc., were the first Congolese to study in Belgium before independence, and mostly benefited from missionaries' support. They also decided to create standard, modern and international standing schools and universities where many young people could locally study and be trained. Hence, Lovanium Catholic University founded in 1954 in Léopoldville (Kinshasa) from a Jesuits' embryo of Kisantu. The best African university, whose first rector was a Catholic priest from the Belgian Malines diocese, Bishop Luc Gillon (1920-1998)⁸⁷. Upon arrival, he continued building it and its chapel, whose roof is shaped like a fish, an architectural masterpiece. It organised the faculties of Agriculture, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Philosophy and Letters, Political, Social and Economic Science, Psychology and Pedagogy, Sciences and Theology and was sponsored by the government, Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

What made Lovanium so famous?

⁸⁷ PhD in Physical Sciences (nuclear energy), Catholic University of Leuven in 1952, and a researcher at the US's Princeton and Berkeley University. Donated by the USA, because of the Shinkolombwe uranium used for the USA's first atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this centre was managed later by Congolese Prof. Félix Malu wa Kalenga (1936-2011; BSc in Electrical and Electronic Engineering/Lovanium in 1962, MSc in 1963/Berkeley, University of California, and PhD in Applied Sciences in 1969/Catholic University of Louvain), he led the construction of the TRIGA Mark II nuclear reactor in 1972 of what became, under the auspices of the OAU, the Centre Régional d'Etudes Nucléaires de Kinshasa (CREN-K).

Now, the University of Kinshasa, Lovanium was renowned as, in 1959, it was the first African university to have a TRIGA (Training and Research Reactor for Isotope Production General Atomic) Mark I atomic reactor operating with 50 kg of uranium enriched to 20%. It was named TRICO, the portmanteau of TRIGA and CONGO: a highly scientific centre managed by its rector, Bishop Luc Gillon, who advocated its acquisition. As the first country in Africa to have such an atomic reactor, the new independent Republic of the Congo became a member of the International Nuclear Energy Agency (INEA) in 1960, before even Egypt and South Africa.

What about the other DRC universities?

The second was the *Université Officielle du Congo Belge et du Ruanda-Urundi (UOC)*, which opened in Elisabethville, Katanga, in 1956. After the Catholics, the Protestants also financed their university, the *Université Libre du Congo (ULC)*, which opened in 1963 in Stanleyville, Orientale Province. Its first rector was Doctor Decker, and its board of directors chair was Isaac Kalonji Mutambayi.



What about the London Human Zoo (1905-1907) and those Congolese Pygmies brought from the Ituri forests?

1905. An English adventurer and traveller was the talk of his town of Brandesburton, East Yorkshire: Colonel James Jonathan Harrison (1858-1923), who had travelled to the Congo basin in 1904 to live with the pygmies in the Ituri forest. Harrison finally brought six pygmies to Europe for an exhibition. He invited the eldest pygmy, Bobgani (sometimes spelt Bokani or Bokane), to discover the white man's land. They arrived in London on the 1st of June 1905 via Egypt, moved to Brandesburton Hall and, five of them, visited the

Westminster Parliament in London on 29 June 1905, were exhibited at central London's racecourse, other parks and public places, returned to Brandesburton, all of them exhibited in the city hall, and parks; they recorded a 78 T record on 25 August, the first by Africans in England. In October 1905, they went for an exhibition tour: Manchester and Liverpool accompanied by the linguist Hoffman, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Birmingham, London again, Bradford and Portsmouth; they moved to Berlin in July 1906, back to England in August at Grimsby, Barmouth and Aberystwyth in Wales on 26-27 September, Eastbourne on 2-5 October, and from 24 December at London's Olympia, West-cliff on Sea in February 1907, Bristol on 25 May and at London's Earls Court exhibition in June-September 1907. The six pygmies and Harrison embarked on the ship Hindoo from Hull on November 17 and arrived home in Ituri in January 1908.

What about the Bokani bust in the Wales Museum?

The Cardiff National Museum of Wales has, among other objects connected to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the only bust of Bokani, which the artist John Sir William Goscombe (1860-1952) sculpted.



Bust of Bokani in Cardiff museum⁸⁸

But, were there also other Human Zoos elsewhere? What Belgium exempted of those negroes' villages?

Almost a fad at the time, for the first Brussels Universal Exhibition from 10 May to 8 November 1897, Leopold II decided on a colonial section at Tervuren as a publicity stunt to lobby investors, even to corrupt public opinions for his Congo business. 267 Congolese were exhibited to the public, like zoo animals, and were divided into three fenced Congolese tribes villages near natural ponds: two "Bangala"

⁸⁸ <https://museum.wales/collections/online/object/c4a51cc9-c570-37c0-a2f7-350f18e2d57f/Bokani-a-Pigmy-chief/> [Accessed 23 May 2023].

villages and one “Bayombe”. Two Congolese died during the long journey from Congo to Brussels. There were also 90 *Force Publique* soldiers. There was also the fourth “village of Gijzegem”, the Flemish commune, where the Catholic Abbé Van Impe wanted to show how he was ‘educated’ and ‘civilised’ Congolese. In the end, the colonial section of Tervuren attracted a million visitors with the peak of attendance recorded between June 27 and August 30, the summer months and the arrival and departure of the Congolese where visitors were sometimes 40,000 per day, attracted to scenes of everyday African life, performed by ‘live actors’ in the open air. Nevertheless, as soon as the Congolese arrived, public opinion began to criticise the exhibition and such visitors’ attitudes. As that 1897 summer was cold and wet, and because of the deplorable conditions in which those Congolese were kept, many fell ill, and seven



died during the exhibition: Sambo, Mpemba, Ngemba, Ekia, Nzau, Kitukwa and Mibange. Alas, their bodies were not buried in the local cemetery but in an unconsecrated ground reserved for adulterers and suicides. It was only in 1953 that those bodies were properly reburied in graves in the courtyard of the Tervuren Catholic Church of St. John the Evangelist, where a day of commemoration is organised every year for them. However, it is important to revisit those inhuman acts by learning and analysing the then-historical context and the evolution of mentality. This is not to deny the fact that those behaviours were inhuman and needed to be strongly condemned. And, during the first colonial exhibition in Antwerp in 1885, a “negro village” was set up with 12 Africans from the Congo, Zanzibar and the Portuguese colonies. In 1894, another World’s Fair in Antwerp featured 144 Congolese in an “exotic” setting; 8 died during the exhibition. In 1930, soldiers from the *Force Publique* attended the Universal Exhibition in Antwerp and paid tribute to the seven Congolese who died in Tervuren in

1897. Despite these experiences, the ‘negro village’ was reintroduced at Brussels 1958’s World Fair, “Expo 58”: a “Congolese village” was built and, with the Congo exhibition, Belgium promoted its achievements and justify its presence in the Congo, while the independence suns were raising in Africa: 600 Congolese came in Belgium showed off during the day in the “Tropical Gardens” and, at



night, housed in the CAPA building (*Centre d'Accueil pour le Personnel Africain*) in Tervuren. Racist visitors and humiliating behaviour provoked polemics and complaints, particularly from Congolese stu-

dents and intellectuals living in Belgium: the village closed before the end of the exhibition that claimed a Congolese victim: Juste Bonaventure Langa, born on September 26, 1957, in Léopoldville, died on May 22, 1958, in Leuven. The 8-month-old was buried in the Tervuren cemetery, and on his tombstone is a marble plaque where it is written: “*Exposition Universelle 1958/Le Congo pense à toi*”⁸⁹.

What about other Western countries?

The human zoo was a Western culture of exoticism held in Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Austria and the United States. There were also Senegalese ‘villages’ (Liège 1905, Gent 1913, Antwerp 1930), Japanese (Charleroi 1911), Filipino (Gent 1913) and Indian (Brussels 1935), where African men, women and children were exhibited.

End...

In 1904, the young pygmy Ota Benga (c. 1883 – March 20, 1916) was captured in the Congo, his wife and children killed, and sold to an American trader and missionary, Samuel Phillips Verner, who brought him to the USA and exhibited him in Saint-Louis (Missouri) Universal Exhibition in a ‘human zoo.’ He then took part, along with other blacks, in a special Olympiad: the Anthropological Games,

⁸⁹ https://www.africamuseum.be/fr/discover/history_articles/the_human_zoo_of_tervuren_1897, [Accessed 18 April 2024].

where, without knowing the rules of the game, they performed poorly, proof that pygmies (and sub-humans) are not made for the Olympic Games. In 1906, he was exhibited in the Bronx Zoo (New York City) in the company of chimpanzees, an orangutan, and a gorilla, under the title of 'old ancestors of man.' Released because of protests, he was taken in by an orphanage in Virginia and committed suicide in 1916, having lost all hope of returning home because of the First World War. Another shameful case, the most dramatic, was the South African Saartjie Baartman, nicknamed the Venus Hottentot, born in 1780, exhibited in London in 1810 and Paris in 1814 for her prominent buttocks. She died of poverty in Paris in 1815, and her bones were kept in the Museum of Humanity until 1971. It was only in 2002 that her remains were repatriated and buried in South Africa. There were also Congolese and Africans who sacrificed their lives and died for Europe, particularly during the two Great Wars: they fought the German Nazis, and also the Congolese contributed to the victories of the Allies during the Second Great War. But those stories are not well-told, known and taught.

●



Nsongo district. ABIR atrocities. Hands of Lingomo and Bolengo murdered in May 1904. The two white men are Mr. Stannard and Mr. Harris of the Congo Balolo Mission at Baringa.

Chap V. Rev. William HUGHES, My Great Grandfather: Interview with Jan WILLIAMS

How are you related to Pastor William Hughes?

My Grandfather, Stanley Hughes, was his only son. Stanley was named after H.M. Stanley, who met Dr Livingston and was a friend of Rev William Hughes. My father was the son of Stanley Hughes and, therefore, the grandson of Rev William Hughes.

What do you know about him, or what are your family's memories of him?

He was born in 1856 on a farm named Tu Hwnt I'r Afonn, a place called Rhoslan, Near Criccieth, North Wales. He was a Baptist minister who was educated at a Baptist college in Llangollen, North Wales and married Kate, the daughter of the college principal. He was the youngest of 9 children and was from a farm called Tu Hwnt i'r Afon near Criccieth in Gwynedd, North Wales. His first language was Welsh, and he learnt English before he became a minister. He had 3 children: Stanley, Claudia and Kate. The two girls died very young. Pastor Hughes died in Conwy on 28 January 1924 and was buried in Old Colwyn, Wales, with his first wife and two daughters⁹⁰.



William Hughes children: Stanley Hughes (died age 67), Claudia Hughes (died age 30) and Kate Hughes (died age 22).

What do you know about his journey in Congo?

He wrote a book, "Darkest Africa: The Way Out".

What do you know about her idea of Congo and the African Institute of Wales?

⁹⁰ Other Institute students who were died and buried in Old Colwyn cemetery: Kinkasa (Congo 1875, + 5 May 1888), Nkanza (Congo 1877, + 3 April 1892), Samba (Congo 1877, + 9 March 1892), Ernestina Francis (born in 1883 in Banana to a white Portuguese man and a black Congolese woman, + 11 January 1914), George Steane (Cameroun, + 17 May 1894), Alfred W. Johnson (Freetown, Sierra Leone, + 9 June 1894) and Kobina Boodoo (Ghana/Côte d'Or 1887, + 11 April 1909).

He had the idea to bring the young boys to Colwyn Bay to educate them by teaching them trades and then sending them home when they had learnt such trades as Carpentry, Printing and Tailoring. If you type in The Congo Institute into Google, there is a lot of information on the net.

How did your family contribute to this institute, and how did it close down?

Many people contributed to the Institute, as well as members of his family. He lost all his money fighting a court case about the Institute and died in a workhouse.

How did your great-grandfather pass his last days, and how did he die and get buried?

When he died, he was buried in the local churchyard, and there are many other graves of young boys who died whilst they were at the Institute. His wife died very young, and so did his two daughters.

What happened to the building of the institute after his death?

The building was sold to pay the debts

Do you or your family have any connection with Africa and with some families of these first Congo boys?

We do not have any contact with anyone, but many people have visited my grandfather to find out more about the institute over many years.

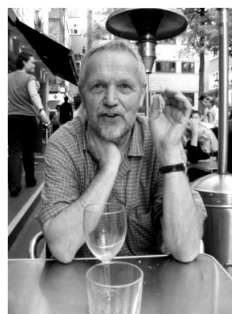
Do you have a wish about your great-grandfather's vision and legacy?

I live near Colwyn Bay with my husband, and we have two boys who are now 41 and 36; one is married, and the other is getting married in November. We have one granddaughter. I have always been interested in the story, and it has been my ambition to meet someone from the Congo who was related to someone who received an education at the Institute. I would like to know why you are interested in the story of Rev William Hughes and how you knew of him.



Chap VI. Edmund Dene Morel and The Congo Reform Association: Interview with Colins THOMAS

WE IN WALES take some pride in our internationalist outlook – in men like Edward Williams, alias Lolo Morgannwg, who fought against the slave trade throughout his life, men like David Ivon Jones, the only white man in South Africa to proclaim his support for the foundation of the African National Congress, the miners of South Wales who went to Spain to fight for what they saw as a struggle against fascism and for freedom and democracy.



Now I must admit that Edmund Morel's Welsh connection is a bit tenuous. He was born in Paris in 1873 to a French father and an English mother who came from a long line of Quakers. His father died when he was four, and his mother brought him to Britain, where they lived on the edge of poverty. Eventually, he was to set up his own home in Wales, only just in Wales, it must be admitted – in Hawarden, just on the right side of the border – but it was from here that he fought his great campaign against the exploitation of the Congo. But I'm jumping the gun. First, I need to say what led him to fight that campaign. At seventeen, he became a clerk at Elder Dempster, a Liverpool-based shipping line.

It had a contract for carrying cargo to and from the Congo. His ability to speak French led to the firm sending him to Antwerp to represent the firm's interests. It wasn't long before his curiosity was



aroused – what sort of trade imports ivory and rubber from one direction but exports only guns and chains in the other? In Antwerp, Morel found himself face to face with the evidence that something deeply suspicious was going on. “It was as if, in 1942 or 1943,” writes Adam Hochschild in *King Leopold’s Ghost*, “somebody who had begun to wonder what was happening to the Jews had taken a job inside the headquarters of the Nazi railway system.”⁹¹ Until a few years ago, Edmund Dene Morel could be described as a forgotten hero, but this book has helped to change that, and it has, in turn, inspired documentaries like Peter Bate’s *White King, Red Rubber, and Black Death*. I’ll run you an extract from that film. Whilst working in Antwerp, Morel had become aware of the colossal profits being made by King Leopold and his investors.

£20 shares were now selling for £800 to £1000, and Morel had unearthed clues as to the brutal methods used to achieve them. “It must be bad enough to stumble upon a murder. I had stumbled upon a secret society of murderers with a King for a croneman.”⁹² Not surprisingly, the Elder Dempster shipping line wasn’t very keen on employing someone who had moral concerns about one of the company’s most profitable customers and in 1901, he resigned and moved to Hawarden. He had married Mary Richardson a few years earlier and had a young family, so living on what he could make from his occasional journalism must have been hard going.

But Morel was driven by a powerful sense of outrage at the evidence of what was going on under Leopold’s regime, much of it gathered from missionaries working in the Congo. “Blood is smeared all over the Congo State”, he wrote, “its history is blood-stained, its deeds are bloody, the edifice it has reared is cemented with blood of unfortunate Negroes, spilt freely with the most sordid of all motives, monetary gain; blood which calls aloud to Heaven for retribution upon the shedders of it.”⁹³

As you can tell from this quote from his 1901 pamphlet, *Trade in West Africa*, Morel was becoming a master at propaganda, and two years later, he started his own newspaper, the *African Mail*. He drew into his campaign some powerful allies, not only Roger

⁹¹ Hochschild, A., *King Leopold’s Ghost*, Pan Books, 2006, p. 177.

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 181.

⁹³ From Morel’s pamphlet “Trade in West Africa” quoted in “E.D. Morel, the man and his work” by E. Seymour Cocks p83

Casement, then the British consul in the Congo, but also writers like Joseph Conrad, whose novel *Heart of Darkness* was based on what he had seen for himself there, Mark Twain, who wrote *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, sending up the ruthless Belgian King, and Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes and a huge admirer of Morel. Wikipedia claims that the journalist Ed Malone, the hero of Conan Doyle's novel *The Lost World*, is based on Morel. Since finding that reference, I have read it and found it's set in South America, not Africa, so I'm not wholly convinced. But it does refer to the indigenous people being terrorized "with the most inhuman tortures to force



Morel grave at Golden Green Crematorium/London: "In Memory of Edmund Dene Morel. Vindicator of freedom for natives of the Congo, champion of Peace amid the Passions of War, fearless Advocate of Truth. Born 10 July 1873 of French and English Parents. Died 12 November 1924."

them to gather the India-rubber"⁹⁴ and one of the hero's allies says to him (a posh English voice seems right for Lord John) "There are times, young fellah, when every one of must make a stand for human right and justice, or you never feel clean again."⁹⁵ Morel himself didn't need convincing of that. He'd already made his stand and the damning report produced in 1905 by Roger Casement, on the atrocities committed under Leopold's regime, led Morel to set up the Congo Reform Association in the same year. By the time the Conservatives were voted out in 1906 and succeeded by a reforming

⁹⁴ "The Lost World" by A. Conan Doyle, Penguin Red Classic 2007 p. 78.

⁹⁵ *Ibid* p. 69.

Liberal government, the Congo Reform Association was, according to a biography of Morel, “making remarkable head-way, thanks very largely to the energy and enthusiasm of Morel who in this year alone produced no fewer than eight new pamphlets on various aspects of the question, and began to appear regularly on the public platform.”⁹⁶

.. GREAT ..

CONGO DEMONSTRATION.

THE
Protest of Christian England
.. AT THE ..
ROYAL ALBERT HALL
.. ON ..
Friday, November 19, 1909,
AT 7.30 P.M.

Chairman: HIS GRACE
THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

SPEAKERS:
The Right Rev. **THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,**
Rev. Dr. JOHN CLIFFORD, M.A.
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BUSES from all parts of London pass the Door.

That quote came from what appears to be the only biography of Morel, written in 1919 by Seymour Cocks, and I found it on the internet. It can be read for free on the Canadian Library website. Someone there obviously thought that Morel was of sufficient significance to be copied on every page of the biography. Through it, I learnt that by now he had won the support of M. Vander-svelte, the leader of the Belgian Socialist Party, and was al-

lowed to meet both Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, and Theodore Roosevelt, the American President at the time. As Tim Jeal says in his superb biography of Stanley, Morel was “the mastermind behind the campaign to expose the atrocities.”⁹⁷

In 1906, Morel produced his most important and most influential book, *Red Rubber*. What I find most impressive about it is the way

⁹⁶ E. Seymour Cocks op cit.

⁹⁷ “Stanley” by Tim Jeal pub. by Faber and Faber 2007 p450

it identifies with the victims of the atrocities. Many of those sympathetic to the Congo Reform Association nevertheless reveal deeply patronising attitudes in their writings. Morel, like all of us, was a creature of his time, but even though he never went to the Congo, he seems able to identify imaginatively with the plight of its people. He writes in *Red Rubber* of Belgian's claims that it had constructed public works and elegant stations along the river, bringing civilisation to the region. Morel responds, "Go behind those fine stations, those camps of military instruction, those Government-run plantations. Go behind them into the forest and the bush. Mingle with the people of the land. Witness their abiding desolation, their daily griefs."⁹⁸

He continues "...death and torture rewards protest against the violation of the sanctuaries of sex, against the rape of the newly-married wife, against bestialities foul and nameless, exotics introduced by the white man's 'civilisation' and copied by his servants and general, purposeful, satanic crushing of body, soul and spirit in a people – crushing so complete, so thorough, so continuous, that the capacity of revisiting aught, however vile, slowly perishes."

No wonder *Red Rubber* made such an impact, with thousands attending protest meetings in Liverpool and Hull. This is how the television documentary *Wilderness Explored* describes the effect that *Red Rubber* had at the time. Adam Hochschild is more sceptical about the success of the Congo Reform Association, pointing out that, under Belgian colonial rule, forced labour continued for decades after the Association was wound up in 1913. But Hochschild also points out that "In believing that Congo land did belong to the Africans, Morel was inherently more radical than almost all of those he worked with."⁹⁹ You can see that radicalism in the book he produced after visiting Nigeria for himself - *Nigeria; its People and its Problems*. In it, he attacked those who wished to Europeanise and denationalise the West African, "to bestow upon him European culture, law, religion and dress and to unmake him as an African".¹⁰⁰

A year later, that radicalism was to cost him dearly. His opposition to the militarism and the secret diplomacy that led to the First World

⁹⁸ "Red Rubber" by E.D. Morel originally published in 1906, reprinted 2005 by University Press of the Pacific, 92 p.

⁹⁹ Hochschild, *op cit*, p. 272.

¹⁰⁰ "Nigeria; its Peoples and its Problems" by E.D. Morel published by Smith Elder and Co. 1913 quoted by Seymour Cocks, *op cit*, p. 140.

War led first to his being ousted as one of the candidates to represent Liverpool Liberals and later to the loss of his liberty – he was imprisoned because of his continuing opposition to what he called “...those dreadful fields of senseless carnage where millions expiate the sin, the faults and the follies of the few.”¹⁰¹ He ended up as an M.P. for the Independent Labour Party, a radical internationalist party that always had a strong following in Wales. But that’s another story. Today, I’ll stick to his remarkable achievement in the Congo, one of the most successful moral and political campaigns ever fought in Britain. He is now beginning to be honoured for what he achieved. But, I want to make sure that we Welsh do some of that honouring, perhaps even claiming him, as we have Keir Hardie and Paul Robeson as honorary Welshmen, even though they suffered from the misfortune of not being born here!



Who was Morel?

Edmund Morel was the man who led the campaign against King Leopold II’s exploitation of Congo.



Edmund Dene Morel

How did Morel become interested in what King Leopold II was doing in Congo?

He was working as a shipping clerk, first in Liverpool and then in Antwerp, when he realised that the profits made by King Leopold II were achieved through the forced labour of the Congo people.

What did he do as he got a heavy conscience about what he had learned about Congo?

He resigned from his job and devoted the next twelve years of his life to exposing what was going on.

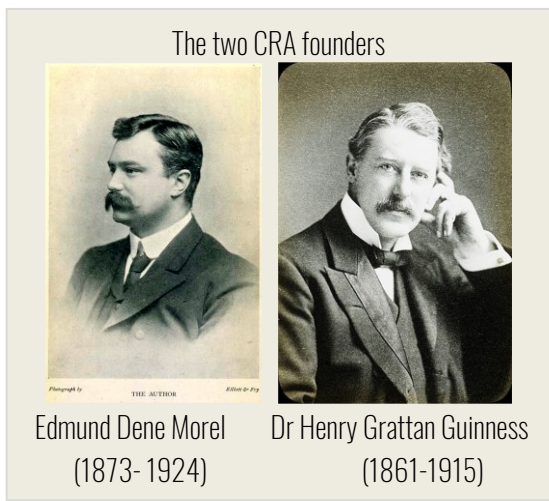
¹⁰¹ Morel “The Outbreak of War” Oct. 14th 1914 quoted in Seymour Hicks, *op cit.*, p. 245.

What was the topic of his newspaper?

He founded the 'West African Mail' as he put it "to meet the rapidly growing interest in West and Central African questions."

How did he find the Congo Reform Association, and who were his main contributors and sponsors?

He wrote to members of Parliament, businessmen, churchmen, and famous people for support and founded the Congo Reform Association at a public meeting in Liverpool on March 23rd, 1904, attended by more than a thousand people. His supporters included Roger Casement, the first British consul in Congo, the authors Joseph Conrad and Arthur Conan Doyle, and the great-grandson of William Wilberforce, who had helped to end the slave trade in the British Empire. Later, the American author Mark Twain also became involved.



What actions and activities did they take to bring Congo to the top of the media and to influence public opinion?

Public meetings were held throughout Britain, and letters and photographs were sent to newspapers throughout the world, as well as books and pam-

phlets.

Was it easy for him, as King Leopold II was very powerful and had strong relationships with the British Royal family as well as with the American government?

No, and King Leopold II also used the media to try to counter Morel's campaign.

How did the British parliament get involved?

In May 1903, Morel persuaded the House of Commons to pass a resolution urging that the people of Congo "should be governed with humanity" and criticising Leopold II. Casement was given the go-

ahead for his investigation, and later, there were further critical debates in Parliament on Congo.

What were the conclusions of Roger Casement, the British special consul in Congo?

His report was extremely critical, providing evidence of the cutting off of hands and extreme brutality.

What happened after the big demonstration against Leopold at the Royal Albert Hall in London on 19th November 1909?

Even though Morel failed to convince the British government that Congo land should belong to the people of Congo, the announcement by the Belgian colonial minister that there would be major reforms suggested that the campaign of the Congo Reform Association had been successful.

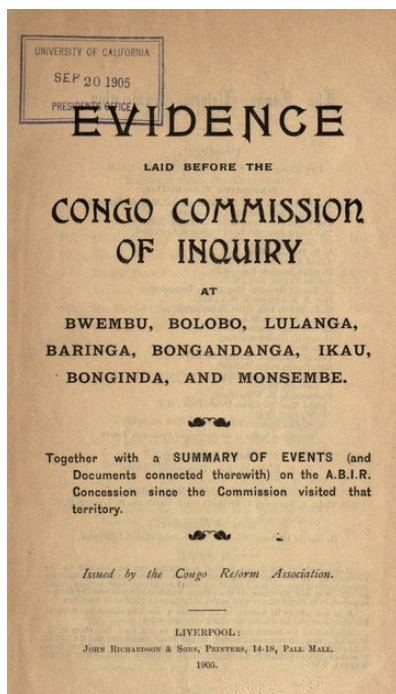
King Leopold II died just after that event and gave the Congo to Belgium; what happened then to the Congo Reform Association?

The Congo Reform Association was wound up on June 16th 1913, and Morel told the final meeting, "We have struck a blow for human justice that cannot and will not pass away."

How did he spend the last days of his life, and what happened to the Congo Reform Association archives?

He campaigned against the secret diplomacy that led to the First World War and, because of his opposition to that war, was imprisoned by the British government in 1917.

Nevertheless, the people of Dundee elected him to the Parliament as a Labour Member of Parliament after the war, and he remained an M.P. until he died in 1924. Some of the files of the Congo Reform Association (e.g. its evidence to the Congo Commission of Inquiry in 1905) are still available.



What lessons could Congolese today learn from Edmund Morel and the Congo Reform Association?

No matter how difficult the task might seem, it is possible to fight against injustice and win.

Do you know if Edmund Morel had any kind of contact or exchange with Henry Morton Stanley, or how Stanley reacted when he heard about Congo matters?

Although Stanley knew and liked Casement, he did not seem to have met or contacted Morel. Towards the end of his life, Stanley became disillusioned with King Leopold II but continued in his mistaken belief that “the king was doing what he could to prevent more atrocities” (P. 450 of *Stanley – the Impossible Life of Africa’s Greatest Explorer* by T. Jeal)

Do you have any comments on how we could work in the same spirit as Edmund Morel?

Decide on the right course of action and stick to it no matter what the obstacles are – and make full use of the media to help win supporters for your cause.



Leopold II's Atrocities: The hippopotamus-tail whip

RED RUBBER: BOTOFE — MAPULE — MAPUYE

It was also in Mai-Ndombe that rubber was exploited. After H.M. Stanley's visit in 1882 and other explorers, Leopold II made it, by then Lake Leopold II district, his private estate, named the Crown Estate (Le Domaine de la Couronne). Prohibited to the missionaries and merchants, it was there that the King's zealous agents committed most of the atrocities, as it was there that the wild rubber liana could easily be found. The Ntomb'e Njale and other Nkundo/Mongo tribes named that wild rubber "Botofe," while the Basakata called it "Nshinga n'Ipwe", "Mpwe", "Mapuye", or "Mapule", and the Batere, Basakata's sub-tribe, dialect name it "Led'ka" (which sticks two parts). One of the Ntomba proverbs says, "Botofe bole iwa": *working for the rubber means death*. On the right bank of Lake Mai-Ndombe, near the village of Selenge, lived the grandchildren of those who had their hands amputated by the King's agents. Around Bokoro, the first traditional chief who worked for the rubber enterprise was Kentee, chief of Mbantin chieftdom, the first Mbantin chief or "Mojuu" as they name them, who welcomed the Catholic missionaries, especially Father Jules Denis, the founder of Bokoro in 1910. However, like other traditional chiefs, Kentee refused to work for Leopold II—not until Father Denis convinced him to collaborate and make a good trade deal by collecting rubber instead of resisting. Since Kentee became a rubber collector, he maintained avoiding betraying his population when providing rubber. As he travelled from village to village collecting it, he was nicknamed and was called "Izampuye" ("Izaa"=collector; "mpuye" pet name of "mapuye"=rubber's liana), which means 'the rubber collector'. Christianised, he offered his chieftdom lands around Bokoro to the Catholics to build schools, churches, and hospitals. After his death, his young brother Nkamaja became the ruler king, "Mojuu Itui", as said in Kisakata, Basakata language. He was the nastiest of the Basakata kings. Nicknamed Kend'b', Mpisaa, Kemumwa, and Ifrabosaw, he received machine guns from the King's agents and travelled from village to village to force people to collect the rubber. He was nearly a dictator, in modern words, his people's leader. Congolese never accepted Leopold II's agents' methods; they resisted, revolted and assassinated some of them and indigenous working for them, as they also did during the slave trade, where, for example, the Kongolese princess Kimpa Vita opposed the Portuguese colonisation. Some stories of those resistances remained famous. In the Sakata village of Boyon, Mr Lohman, nicknamed Lekukoi (wasps in Kisakata as he was very thin and, above all, a mean man), a Dane Leopold II's rubber collector, was assassinated by spears and was buried at the former Kutu's cemetery. Also, as he abused his power, becoming arrogant and forcing people to increase their rubber, chief ('Mojuu' in Kisakata), Augustine Uts'r, a rubber collector, was assassinated by the rival chiefs with spears pierced through his chest, while he had hid in the Catholic chapel of the village of Nsontin where the catechist was his own brother-in-law: Albert Nsinga.

Chap VII. The Congo Journey in Footsteps of H. M. STANLEY: Interview With Tim BUTCHER

When working as the correspondent of London's newspaper Daily Telegraph, Tim Bucher decided to make the Congo River journey in the footsteps of another Daily Telegraph journalist, Henry Morton Stanley. Like Stanley, he finally published an interesting book of stories of his journey (Tim Butcher, Blood River: A Journey to Africa's Broken Heart, London, Chatto & Windus, 2007). The book is a new opening window to anyone who wants to know more about the Congo.

How did you get the interest in making the Congo journey, the same made, a century before, by one of your Daily Telegraph's colleagues, known by his given name of Henry Morton Stanley, while his birth name was John Rowlands?



As a writer working in Africa since 2000, I kept being drawn to the Congo. My research, my plans, my dreams and, indeed, my fears brought me back to the Congo, a name that hums with portent. And when I found that its modern history began when its river was first charted by a man sent to Africa, like me, by the Daily Telegraph, I knew I had to go back to attempt his original journey.

Did you manage to read his own journey's book before yours, and what amazed you then?

My journey took three years to plan, a large part of which was finding out exactly where Stanley had gone and what he had done. To do this, I tracked down his published books, diaries and newspaper articles along with as much secondary material as I could find written by others. I was amazed at his chutzpah and surprised, to be honest, at how flabby his writing was. I was perhaps most interested by the way he divides opinion so sharply – people tend to have strong views on Stanley, ones of hero-worship or hatred.

Was it easy for you, or did you experience the same difficulties as Stanley in preparing for that journey? What were your main challenges?

My challenges were legion but very different from his. First, I knew where I was going. Stanley was going into terra incognita, or at least terra incognita for the white man, whereas I knew the ge-

"It was during this part of the journey that I had one of my most profound Congolese experiences. (...) The scene I saw in the twenty-first century was no different from that seen by Stanley in the nineteenth century or by pygmy hunter-gatherers over earlier centuries. It was equatorial Africa at its most authentic, seemingly untouched by the outside world. (...) It was a moment of horrible revelation. I felt like a Hollywood caveman approaching a spaceship, slowly working out that it proved life existed elsewhere in time and space. But what made it so horrible was the sense that I had discovered evidence of a modern world that had tried – failed – to establish itself in the Congo. It was a complete reversal of the normal pattern of human development. A place where a railway track had once carried trainloads of goods and people had been reclaimed by virgin forest, where the noisy huffing of steam engines had long since lost out to the jungle's looming silence." (Bucher, T., *Op. cit.*, pp. 248-249)

ography. Security was a greater problem for me, I would argue, because of modern weapons in the hands of warring rebel groups in parts of the Congo. One thing I shared with him was the risk from the same clutch of tropical diseases, although, of course, I had modern antibiotics, something he did not have.

When he docked at Bagamoyo from Zanzibar, Stanley explored lakes and rivers and crossed the Tanganyika. His first foot to Congo was at Moba, which was where you started your Congo journey in his footsteps. Did you find any memory of him or other explorers?

I found one chief in DRC who assured me that David Livingstone was buried in his village. Sadly, this was not true. It typified the reaction whenever I mentioned Stanley and the other explorers in meetings with people on my

trip. They would often recognise the names and the fact that they played a role some time back in their history, but their grasp of detail was not reliable.

Did you also find other stories about famous cities, Nyangwe, the Manyema forest, and the Lualaba River?

Indeed, these stories make up much of the drama of my book. Towns like Kasongo were once huge, important communities, but now they are abandoned and broken in the jungle. The Lualaba, as the upper Congo is known, is already an enormous river even though it lies 2,000 km from the sea.

You spent days in the deep Congo rainforest. What have you observed that made you a little sad?

The lack of wildlife was memorable – the local community hunted for ‘bushmeat’, which meant the jungle was unexpectedly silent.

Stanley and Livingstone, before him, were witnesses to the Arab slave trade in Congo. A century later, did you witness similar human rights abuses?

While slavery has ended, the deprivation suffered by a community that has endured war for over a decade was huge. Human rights abuses were very common, I am sad to say.

The turning point in Stanley’s Congo exploration was when he arrived at the last Boyoma or Stanley’s Falls cataracts and saw the river turning left side; he became sure that the Lualaba was not, as Livingstone thought it, the Nile source, but, as he learned from the locals, the Congo River, how was your Kisangani experience?

I was, at first, delighted to reach Kisangani. After weeks of bush-whacking to come to a city of a million souls, in the middle of the jungle, slap-bang on the Equator, was overwhelming. I will never forget the sound of my mobile phone chirruping back into life.



Boma main tourist attraction: H.M.
Stanley's Baobab Tree

How were your days in Kisangani?

They got more and more depressing over the two weeks I spent there. Kisangani should be a thriving port. It is at the terminus of a 1,000-mile navigable stretch of river, and boats should be coming and going all the time. Yet when I got there, all I found was decay. The riverboats had stopped moving, and the city felt more and more cut off from the real world.

How could you then manage to travel down the river to Kinshasa?

Without any Congolese boats moving, I ended up hitching a ride on a United Nations boat guarded by Uruguayan sailors.

Have you had time to visit some of Stanley's remains in Kinshasa and the region around it?

I had time, but there are very few Stanley relics in Kinshasa. The Belgians put up a large statue of him on a headland overlooking the river, but, for obvious reasons, after independence, a different attitude applied towards Stanley. The statue was ripped down, and today it is to be found lying on its back in the grounds of a badly-maintained state museum.

And from Kinshasa, you managed to attend the Lower Congo where Stanley especially lost and abandoned his "Lady Alice" canoe and was dead as well as his last British of the expedition, what feeling do you have then?

It was frustratingly difficult to drive from Kinshasa to Matadi and on to Boma. The road is fine – rebuilt by foreign investors – but the security meant that, as a foreigner, I had to stop and persuade people that I should be allowed to drive down the road. Finally, I reached Boma, where a small Stanley museum is maintained. That was the only real reference to Stanley that I found in the Congo, although in Kisangani, there is still a hospital that bears his name. Outside the museum is a large baobab tree called "The Stanley Baobab", and the story goes that he slept inside its hollow trunk. I found no evidence to prove this, however, as in none of his writings does he refer to sleeping inside a baobab at Boma.

What could be said about Stanley at the end of your journey?

I learnt not to love him but to respect him. His stamina and determination were simply phenomenal, and for this, I respect him. Similarly, I was impressed by the way that, having reached the end of the river, he insisted not on going home directly to Europe but on

accompanying his surviving Zanzibari bearers back around the Cape of Good Hope and back to Zanzibar.

When building the now Matadi-Kinshasa road, Stanley became nicknamed Bula Matari, the breaker of the rocks. Did you find any remembrance of the name while in the area?

No reference to that name, although there is a large plaque commemorating the building of the railway between Matadi and Kinshasa¹⁰².

How could you describe and understand the Congolese people, especially the Congo's ongoing crisis and lack of positive management, from that historical background?

History is forgotten in the Congo because the drama of the present is so all-consuming. If you are trapped in a cycle of turbulence, poverty and deprivation, as so many Congolese are, then learning about the history of a hundred years ago can feel irrelevant.

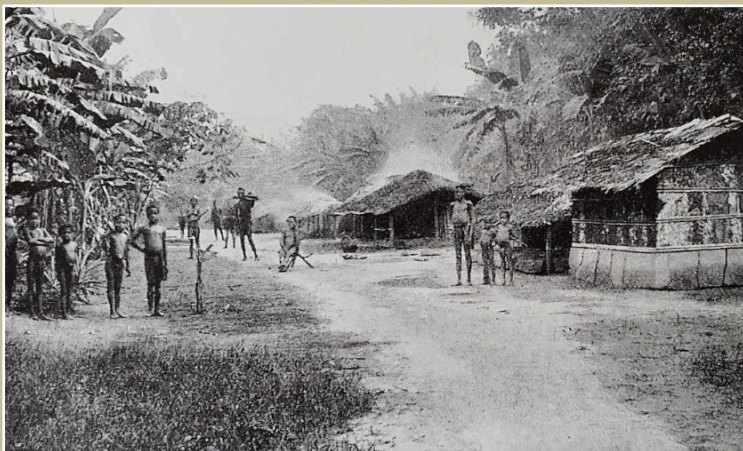
Congo is also famous for Joseph Conrad's "Heart of the Darkness". Did you record or see the pictures or whatever the author described in his novel?

Conrad famously travelled the Congo as a steamboat skipper, an experience that he drew on to write *Heart of Darkness*. But if you read the book, he took great care not to set the story in the Congo or, indeed, in Africa. He uses no names or geographical indicators, and that is what makes the book so powerful. He describes the nastiness that dwells in all our souls, no matter where we are from. Sadly, because of Conrad's travel in the Congo, references to *Heart of Darkness* have become a great cliché of contemporary writing about the Congo. You cannot find a news report on the Congo that does not mention Conrad, the novella or quotes such as "The horror! The horror!" I feel this is a little lazy, as the reality of the Congo surely deserves fresher framing than a 1899 piece of fiction that deliberately does not use the Congo name.



¹⁰² H. M. Stanley founded those cities: Matadi in 1879, Kinshasa he named Léopoldville in 1881, Kisangani he named Stanleyville in 1883 and Mbandaka also in 1883 which Stanley called Equateurville, as he mentioned the line through which the equator passes, before it was renamed Coquilhatville.

Some pictures of Leopold II's Congo atrocities¹⁰³



Village of Baringa before and after it was burned
by Leopold II's agents/soldiers



¹⁰³ Many pictures are very sensitives... Those are from Adam Hochschild, 1998, *Les fantômes du Roi Léopold II. Un holocauste oublié*, Paris : Belfon, it is the bible about Leopold II's atrocities in the Congo.

Chap VIII. Henry Morton Stanley: an adventurer and a lucky self-made man. Interview with Norbert MBU-MPUTU

SINCE working for the Henry Morton Stanley project in Wales, Norbert has become a champion of Stanley's history, following T. Jeal's masterpiece book that established the historical truth about the character. We invited him to share his insights with us.

*

In a debate in Wales, where you lived for almost ten years, about whether or not to destroy the monuments of slave traders, slave owners and colonialists, why were you among those who argued for not destroying these monuments?

Incidentally, I currently live in Bristol the first city to demolish a historical monument, Edward Colston's, on 7 June 2020. This action followed a public demonstration after the assassination of American George Floyd on 25 May 2020, which sparked international protests and led to the creation of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Surprisingly, many people I interviewed, who participated in the demonstrations, told me they had never heard of this man. It was an unregulated movement. A few months later, I contacted some of them, and again, they hadn't searched to dig more about Colston. As a former teacher, a journalist, and someone who has studied philosophy, it became an interesting fact as we were losing opportunities for historical education. Of course, the citizens of a town or university students can and do destroy a monument. That is their right. They must not do so in the name of a misinterpretation of history. I suggest debating, exchanging views, examining the archives and taking the necessary decisions. Then I studied and enjoyed the history of the Romans and their empire, one of the world's colonising peoples. Ancient Roman monuments are well preserved throughout Europe, although the Romans did not come to these countries to play football. They brought their gods, roads, architecture, sandals and weapons. So, my approach is to start by tearing down all those Roman monuments. But the most important step is to re-examine these names, these monuments and the deeds of these heroes; if you inherit a slave-owner's monument, another anti-slavery merchant can

inherit a bigger one, thus restoring history. I only invite you to approach the matter with less emotion... Mobutu had destroyed all these monuments of foreigners in Congo-Zaire; the historical void has never been filled...

What inspired you to think so?

A Dane journalist who, after the cartoons of the Holy Prophet Mohammed sparked demonstrations around the world, went all the way to Iran to show the drawings to the demonstrators. They laughed when they saw them, which they had never seen and had only been told: the Prophet had been insulted. I was also inspired by a filmmaker who made a documentary on the question '*Mugabe, demon or saint?*' at a time when some British considered him a devil. So Stanley was in danger of falling foul of the same manipulation of opinion. As a philosopher, I had to bury my head in the sand.

What about this almost negative cliché about Stanley? Did you participate in the campaign to keep his statue in his hometown of Denbigh intact?

Let's assume there is still some negative publicity surrounding Stanley, his achievements in Africa and his legacy as an explorer. His biographer, Tim Jeal, has already addressed these concerns. In particular, he is the only Stanley's biographer to have been given access to his archives at the Tervuren Museum, purchased by the King Baudouin Foundation—everything Stanley owned in his home town of Surrey and later sold by his adopted great-grandson. Stanley married Dorothy Stanley, with whom he had no children. He also adopted a child, Denzil Stanley, who was undoubtedly a member of his biological family. Denzil Stanley is buried in the same grave as Stanley and his wife, who also had no children but adopted a child who sold all his inheritance. Therefore, Tim Jeal's books provide an update on certain key information, such as the exact date Henry Morton Stanley met Dr David Livingstone at Ujiji, and that, on that day, Stanley did not use the famous quote "*Dr Livingstone, I presume?*" He coined it later to concretise and commemorate this historic meeting. Tim Jeal also explains that the treaties Henry Morton Stanley signed with the Congolese indigenous chiefs lacked a clause stating that 'the Congolese chiefs agree to cede their land to Leopold II.' Instead, Stanley replaced this clause with 'the chiefs agree to trade.' This shift changed everything.

And what about these battles and, above all, his cruelty or even wickedness?

Let's use an elementary, formal and perfect logical syllogism that says, as some have learned it: *'every man is mortal, and Socrates is a man, therefore Socrates is mortal'*. And that is my contribution. Stanley is the only European explorer to have crossed Africa from east to west and vice versa, travelling to Africa more than five times. On all his journeys, Stanley always started on the island of Zanzibar, where he hired porters, students and escorts. Ultimately, Stanley always returned to Zanzibar with the survivors, while others perished. The Zanzibaris, who already used firearms, would have executed him, believing him to be a bad leader and a brutal killer. Then the Africans would kill him, as they did to Emin Pasha and others, because of Stanley's, for example, three-year journeys, crossing forests and savannahs where he was sometimes the only European amongst two or three hundred Africans who would never accept being led by a brutal leader if Stanley was one. Stanley travelled with at least two firearms. Or, in those regions, Arab slave traders in particular had already introduced firearms, making Africans more hostile than ever to foreigners. Stanley went to places nobody knew about, because he had no idea where he would end up, he had no maps like today, he could never be stupid enough to be brutal, and it would be suicidal to start shooting, he would already be murdered. Two examples from my native Mai-Ndombe research and book: on Stanley's journey, when he arrived at Mushie, 500 Baboma warriors arrived to prevent him from docking. He left and continued his road. And at Selenge village, opposite Inongo, Basengele warriors mounted canoes to attack Stanley's steamer. Stanley had to fire a shot in the air to disperse them, then return to Inongo, where he had pitched his tent and made a blood pact with the traditional chief of the Ntomb'e Njale tribe. This was a common practice throughout his travels, similar to his friendship with the Kabaka, the King of Buganda, in present-day Uganda. Stanley had a nimble pencil and was a keen observer. Tim Jeal reveals that Stanley often embellished his stories of battles and victories, especially about his battles and victories. Stanley's own stories on his own words bear a resemblance to an African proverb from the Basakata tribe of the Mai-Ndombe in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which says that: *"When someone describes a fish as big as a man's thigh, it's merely the mouth's way of sweetening itself."* Stanley had a nimble pencil and was a keen observer, and

lucky. On several occasions, tropical diseases could have claimed his life. My fascination with Stanley grew as I first visited his home town of Denbigh, lost in a hinterland. How could it produce such a character?

How could you explain his success in travelling and exploring Africa and the Congo?

Stanley was a lucky and self-made man. I compare him to the Roman general Cneius Pompeius Magnus, who never won a war, and when he arrived at the frontline, he found his enemies engaged in conflict and had already taken their own lives, whereas Pompeius simply returned with victory. Stanley understood, studied and observed African culture: every foreigner and traveller always seeks out the chief of the village or tribe. The chief, who must have several wives, welcomes, feeds and guards all strangers. Stanley had porters and disciples who spoke more than one language, and Stanley spoke Swahili. When he arrived in a particular area, he would send his disciples to meet the chief, with whom Stanley often made a pact of blood and friendship. The chief, guardian of knowledge and treasure, would provide Stanley with detailed information, such as when Stanley solved the Nile problem and explored Lake Victoria using dugout canoes given to him by the king of Buganda. Stanley recruited Africans and blacks who played a crucial role in his expeditions. With his observational skills as a journalist, he revolutionised the expeditions. An explorer now led a group of people on a step-by-step expedition. He could rely on Livingstone's disciples, such as James Chuma and Abdullah Susi, his most trusted men, but he had Dualla, a young Somali with unrivalled negotiating skills. In particular, when he returned to the Congo on behalf of Leopold II, Stanley sent Dualla to negotiate his meetings with the traditional Congolese chiefs, with whom, as with Mutesa of Buganda and Ngaliema, Stanley signed blood pacts.

So, why such a cliché about Stanley's work?

Some jump to quick and unchecked conclusions: "Stanley worked for Leopold II, Leopold II cut off the hands of the Congolese, so Stanley took part in the Congolese genocide." Tim Jeal explains Stanley's attitude when, on the evening of his life, he learned what had happened in the Congo: he booked to visit Leopold II, who never welcomed him again. Jeal also believed that the King, a shrewd businessman, probably had spies around Stanley who could have informed him of Stanley's treatment of the blacks and

Congolese. It's important to remember that Stanley was a Welshman fighting against his own family and country's injustices; not only that he was abandoned after the death of his grandfather but English were still colonised his country, Wales, with their royalties destroyed, nationalist feeling that is often recalled and evoked when living in Wales, much like Irish Roger Casement and Conor Cruise O'Brien, the UN team leader in Katanga in the 1960s, who fought for a united and independent Congo against Tshombe's Katangese secession. Stanley stopped working for the King in 1884, before the Berlin Conference. By the time the Congolese genocide began, following Dunlop's invention of the pneumatic tyre in 1887, Stanley was already a Member of Parliament and approaching the end of his life. Then came Leopold II's atrocities denunciations: the Catholic and Protestant missionaries, the Casement Commission and its voluminous report, Joseph Conrad, Edmund Morel and his Congo Reform Association, all contemporaries of Stanley who would never hide any information or negative evidence against Stanley if they found some. Stanley, like all Europeans who went to Africa, was not saintly, but evidence does not show that he was the devil to bury. For example, after hearing Livingstone's account of his Nyangwe experience, Stanley wrote press articles on his return, urging action against the slave trade. When he arrived and lived for weeks with the Kabaka (King) of Buganda, Mutesa, Henry Morton Stanley was so impressed by the nobility of this black king that he wrote articles about him in London's Daily Telegraph and called for missionaries to evangelise Buganda. Following Stanley's appeal, the first British Protestants arrived in Uganda, and the Catholics later, whose converts became the Ugandan Martyrs, as their King buried them for refusing to be ritually sodomised and continued to pray to the white people's God. Alas, Adam Hochschild's Leopold II's atrocities reference book, whose first pages darkly and mistakenly describe Stanley, does not need to be considered a Bible: Tim Jeal's book brings evidence and answers on Henry Morton Stanley. In summary, Henry Morton Stanley was a fortunate individual with a natural flair for adventure and risk-taking. He possessed a keen sense of verification, calculation, and planning—early skills from his early trained teacher's job?—having envisioned, for example, the large transportable pirogue 'Lady Alice' to be carried. He also possessed a pen and a modern scientific outlook, meticulously and precisely recording everything.

What more?

In his *'Congo. An Epic History of a People'*, Van Reybrouck recounts Disasi Makulo's lesser-known story, one of the eighteen Congolese children H. M. Stanley enslaved from the Arab slave trader Tippu Tip, who kidnapped them from their villages for sale. Stanley took them to Leopoldville and paid Protestant missionaries for their education, including Disasi and another boy he assigned to his assistant, Anthony Swinburne. When the late suffered from gastritis, Disasi and his friend carried him to Boma and met on the way Rev. George Grenfell, who cared about them. Following Swinburne's demise, Disasi became Grenfell's assistant. Grenfell trained and baptised him as a catechist. Disasi then returned home to preach the Gospel alongside Grenfell. Grenfell passed away on July 1, 1906, and was buried in the village of Basoko. Disasi named his son George Grenfell, who later joined Lumumba's government. *"No one knows exactly when Disasi Makulo was born, Van Reybrouck wrote. But then neither did he. "I was born in the days when the white man had still not arrived in our area" (...). It must have been around 1870–72. He died in 1941. Not long before, he had dictated his life's story to one of his sons (...). On December 10, 1883, he [Stanley] returned to the slave camp. Little Disasi witnessed a remarkable scene. "Tippo Tip went to meet Stanley. After a long talk in an incomprehensible language, Tippo Tip called out to our overseer. He gathered us all together and led us over to the two gentlemen. Disasi had no idea what was going on. Once the discussion was over, Stanley's men fetched two rolls of cloth and a few bags of salt from the ship's hold. His Koran teacher told him, with a heavy heart, that this white man wanted to buy him and his companions out. Stanley took eighteen children with him. Disasi's life entered a new phase. Therefore, he valued Stanley not so much as his liberator, but rather as a new and better master. (...) Meeting Stanley constituted a drastic turn in Disasi Makulo's life. (...) Saying farewell to Stanley was hard: "From the first day of our liberation to the moment of farewell, he had been a father to us, full of benevolence,"*¹⁰⁴ Disasi wrote. Stanley's hyperbolic writing style and association with Leopold II often lead to his reputation as an anarchist in our day. However, his attitude was much more nuanced. He had great admiration for Africans, maintained sincere

¹⁰⁴ Van Reybrouck, D., 2012, 2014.

friendships with them, and was greatly loved by many. His combination of kidnapping and bargain hunting was, of course, highly idiosyncratic, but he seems to have been sincerely concerned with the welfare of the children he had bought out of slavery. Stanley also financed the Congo Institute in Colwyn Bay, run by his friend, Pastor William Hughes and donated the money earned from his conference at Caernarfon Castle in Wales, attended by 4,000 people. Returned in London with a Black child, Kalulu, he schooled him. What I noticed with Stanley's detractors, and this is normal with the whole Black Lives Matter campaigns, was a bit of conflation, and a knee-jerk reaction rather than a scientific and academic revisiting of sources approach. I am grateful that Tim Jeal provides a more comprehensive explanation, and that the Denbigh authorities prioritise science over opinions and clichés. If Stanley's atrocities were committed in the Congo, the Congolese, a hundred years later, would still remember and tell these stories. Regrettably, this side has nothing against Stanley. Another confusion on the part of detractors is the removal of Stanley's monument in Kinshasa in 1971: it was President Mobutu's political decision to demolish everything—every monument to foreigners and the names of streets, avenues, and famous places. Stanley's personality has no bearing on this matter¹⁰⁵.



Leopoldville's Mont Stanley: Henry Morton Stanley's former monument before it was removed in 1971

¹⁰⁵ Ibidem, <https://erenow.org/modern/congohistoryofapeople/2.ph>, Visited 20/8/2024.

Chap IX. "Possession" - Anti-Leopold II Play Portraying Harris Seeley. Interview with Oscar PEARCE

LONDON, ALCOLA THEATRE in Dalston. *"Possession"*. A play written by Sasha Hails and directed by Oscar Pearce. Eastern Congo and its atrocities, with its ongoing rapes of women, raped until these days, but blackened by the famous law of

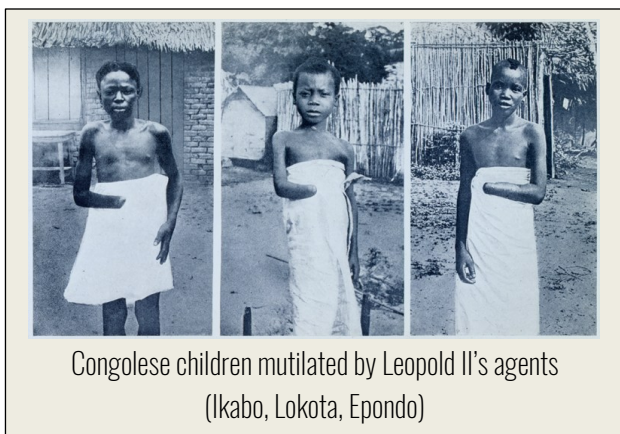


Omerta... To inspire a surge of humanism, pity, and future action, the *"Possession"* reconciles Leopold II's Congo atrocities, where Congolese lost their lives and had their hands amputated, photographed by the British mis-

sionary Alice Harris, with the present as the Congo minerals are hyper-exploited by all multinationals and as Congolese are still losing their lives. The five actors tell the story of this Congolese woman, Kassambayi, who named her daughter 'Hope' since she was born on the London 38 bus linking Clapton to Victoria, the second name of her daughter... Unfortunately, Victoria has a white journalist friend who was interested only in her work and with whom she travelled to Kinshasa.

Fate struck there: Hope was assassinated. Her mother only told her after her death that they came from eastern Congo. And, when the dead body returns, her mother takes the opportunity to talk about her native Congo, and Hope, dead, through her spirit, comes back alive to update and continue to testify and advocate about the Congo. It is a play that every Congolese must see... Hope is also for the NGO founded to raise awareness for the cause of Congo, these wars and atrocities of yesterday and today, and for future actions, including the end of corruption by multinationals, the fight for democracy and good governance with changemaker leaders... With current clichés stigmatising only the negative role of the

European slave traders who bled Africa and exploited the Congo, “Possession” does justice by recalling and telling stories of these ordinary men and women, adventurers of the good Lord and missionaries who left Europe and abandoned their children, sometimes small, for the cause of the Congolese and Africans whom they served and assisted, the Bible in one hand and human promotion in the other, like the Harris family. “Possession” is navigation, in time and space, from London to Kinshasa, from eastern Congo to the macabre history of Congo; it is a permanent questioning and a deep meditation.



This theatre is a present revisiting of the past with an eye on the future. How did you have the idea of writing about the Congo?

Yes, it is about the two British missionaries, John & Alice Seeley Harris. I have always been impressed by their lives and how they were involved in this massive campaign for change in the Congo, where, at that time, Leopold II was exploiting rubber and where millions of Congolese lost their lives. And because now, Congo is suffering because of the exploitation of its cobalt, I am describing in the theatre to be the new rubber, I decided to portray the two atrocities from the British side. The Congo War is not a topic of the mass media. Congolese minerals are now part of our daily lives because they are in our mobile phones, tablets and computers.

Do you know that the Leopold II atrocities, Harris, other fighters and campaigns you portrayed are not well-known and taught in the Congolese school curriculum?

Oh... I didn't know it. Historians need to insert those subjects and stories into the school curriculum so that everyone can become aware of what happened and the way it happened. I was born in Zimbabwe and grew up in Zambia. I am sure that this is a problem in Africa as they seem to remain a historical vacuum: very few people are aware of how the West exploited and even killed Africans during the last centuries' slave trade, and colonisation. Systems put in place by the West exploited Africa.

I agree with the way you made the revival of the ongoing women being raped in the Congo till now, as I am talking to you. So, to be more proactive, how could we contribute to stopping those new Congo atrocities?



My modest contribution to this theatre is to educate people so that they know and are aware that Africa was and is always exploited by Europe. And that,

even when it comes to corruption, for example, it does not benefit Africa and Africans but much the West, while Africa is still living in poverty and lacks democracy and good governance, as if the West is happy with the *statu quo* they are benefiting from.

It looks like you are quoting this famous book, “The Bad Samaritans”, on how the West is not contributing to ending poverty and corruption in Africa, but how it increases it and takes advantage of that situation. And your trilogy is fantastic: Leopold II, the now mineral exploitation and the now Chinese exploitation, as you pointed out.

You're right. I strongly believe that the West, European countries, and America have abandoned Africa, and they must be more involved by contributing to its change, and most importantly, you and I are part of that change needed for Africa.



Chap X. *Mission Impossible? Taking Christianity to the Congo* By Reginald HALL. Interview with the author by Norbert MBU-MPUTU.

BORN IN THE DR Congo, where he was nicknamed 'Kongo', Dr Reginald Hall has written this testimonial book to tell the story of those missionaries, including his parents, who left Europe and the

United Kingdom at that time for Africa and the Congo and who, alongside the Word of God, were change-makers for the Congo and the Congolese people.



For the background and context, we are recording this interview in a special building in London, near Buckingham Palace.

Could you tell me about this fantastic venue, carrying a wonderful part of its history?

We are now at the Royal Overseas League in London. It was founded in 1910 as a venue for people from British colonies when they came to London. It was bought after for those non-British from the colony who fought during WWI and who died for Britain.

Our meeting and interview are for a special occasion since my friend Amba Pascaline connected and shared our contacts. Let me start by asking you your name.

My name is Reginald, and my family name is Hall.

But you told me that you have a special nickname

When I was born, my name was Kongo. Because I was born in what was known as the Belgian Congo [the now Democratic Republic of the Congo] in 1939. It was in a small mission station called Ikaw at the Lulonga River near the administrative centre of Basankusu.

So, here I have a native of Basankusu... When you were born there, what were the first languages you learned and spoke?

It was the Lomongo, as I did not have white and European friends; all my friends were Congolese.

How was it possible for a British to be born in the deep African and Congolese hinterland and equatorial forest?

My parents were Protestant missionaries from the Congo Balolo Mission. They went to Congo in 1924. They both were working there, and my mother was a nurse in charge of a hospital. My birth certificate was signed and registered in Basankusu. My father was an engineer and was working in a printing press, printing educational books and religious materials. He also taught and preached in villages and built churches. After they married in 1936, my parents both moved to Ikala. And there, they built the first secondary school for girls, and my mother, who was a nurse, also started teaching in that school.

Let's kick off with your early years in the area where you were born, Ikala. Do you still remember something, some names, some stories about it?

Oh... I was five when I left for the UK. But what I could remember is that my father and my mother were working all day, and a Congolese was looking after me; his name was Bofaki. And, in this picture on the fourth page of my book, is when I went back to Congo for the first time in 1963, where I was welcomed by Bofaki.

Why did you return to Congo then?

After graduating as a doctor and working for one year in a London hospital, the Balolo Mission had two hospitals, and the doctor who founded and was in charge of the Maringa Hospital retired. So, I was requested to travel again to my native Congo to help and replace the old doctor who had spent his entire life in Congo.

But you made that second return to your native Congo during the post-independence riots and rebellions period.

Yes, it was in the East, but it was calm in the West and where I went.

What souvenirs do you still have from that new Congo adventure?

Doctor Wine, who founded the hospital, trained me for some time in surgery and operations. He told me that he would return to Britain and that I would remain the only doctor in the area. There was

also another hospital in the east, at Luseki, where their doctor also retired and returned to Britain. I spent only one year there. Because I met my wife in June, just before travelling to Congo, we got engaged to each other, and I travelled in August. So, after one year, I returned for my wife and me to marry and also to complete my proper doctor training. And, I never went back to Congo. The real problem for the Congo, at that time, was the public health problems, and the health system had fallen apart. So, I returned to serve.

What about your parents?

We finally returned definitively in 1944. I believe that they did it for my education.

1944 was almost the end of the Second World War. How did you travel from the Congo to Britain? Do you remember how you made it?

We left Basankusu by a special boat to Leopoldville and then the train to Matadi where we boarded a ship to Boma and, as it was the end of the war and everyone was fearing German attacks, sixty ships were accompanied by an American military one, a destroyer and an aeroplane, and after six weeks, we finally arrived in Liverpool and travelled to London by train as my father became one of the missionaries responsible in London. They came back after twenty years of working in the Congo, and so did many other missionaries who dedicated their lives to the Congolese. My father worked again for twenty years before he passed away. My mother also worked as a missionary, interviewing especially new missionaries travelling in Africa. We now live in Newcastle.

Months ago, our friend Pascaline Amba, whom you contacted, helped us to be in touch because this book has now been published. Why have you finally decided to write and publish it?

First, it was an unfinished story about the missionaries written by an American, and I didn't agree with that book's three conclusions. The first conclusion is that after WWI, the missionary flame was extinguished. That was not true, as my father went to Congo in 1920, and so did many other missionaries. So, I decided to revisit the story and bring in some facts. The second conclusion was about Leopold II's Congo years and the atrocities that happened, as the author stated that the missionaries shut their eyes and did not report them, which is false, knowing the missionaries and the values they were teaching. The third false conclusion was that the missionaries failed in Congo by the 1990s because they did not train and direct Congolese to the

universities they did not create, and they also did not train doctors to take care of the health system. So, I needed to find out and dig more about the missionaries' works in the Congo, and what they did and did not do, I needed to find out about the history and the culture of the Congo so that I could make a point of understanding what the missionaries brought and did or did not.

Now, what are the answers to those three false conclusions?

The first thing I found was that since the missionaries were there in Congo, they trained Congolese so that they could continue the Gospel work after their departure. They are doing well today, if only in the field of education, with the Protestant University of Kisangani, then Stanleyville, founded in 1956, while the Catholics had already established the first university, Lovanium, now the University of Kinshasa, then Leopoldville, in 1954, as well as other educational establishments in the country.

What about the connection with the atrocities?

About Leopold II's atrocities, I needed to revisit archives both in London and in Congo, especially meeting reports and letters from Congo to London; it became obvious that, from the beginning, missionaries were telling and writing about those atrocities. However, it was in London that their representatives decided to avoid disap-

pointing King Leopold II, who could stop them from working in the Congo. Even when missionaries who returned reported about it, Leopold II's administration continued to challenge them so that they could be brought to justice. It was a layperson who was working in a missionary's steamboat in Congo, the Dane Daniel Jacob Danielsen, who made the change happen.

He is not well known...

He was accused of mismanagement and bad treatment of the Congolese in charge of bringing them wood for the boat, and was forced to leave the



Congo. When he was on the way back to Leopoldville, Danielson met Roger Casement at the mission station of Bolobo. Casement was appointed as the new British Consul in Congo, in charge of the investigation into Leopold II's atrocities. As Casement needed someone to help him and that he needed to be independent from the Belgian administration, he requested Danielson to work with him, to take his steamboat again and to go up the river; that's what he did, thus becoming the only European who worked with Casement and who followed and listened to all his interviews with Congolese on these atrocities. He also took some photographs of the mutilated. After the investigation, while Casement returned later, Danielson returned to London.

What did he do upon arrival in London?



Danielson

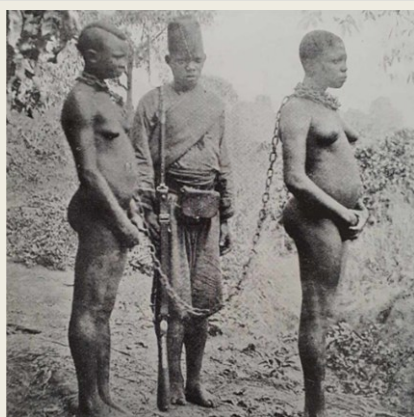
He immediately went to the missionaries' headquarters and told them about what he witnessed in Congo with Casement, but no one believed him. So, he went to Scotland and informed some friends who decided that he must organise a conference, and he organised two important conferences in Edinburgh in 1903. That was the first time that photographs of Congo atrocities were shown in Europe. He told the stories and also showed the pictures. And I think they were also another missionary conference in Glasgow. And, once again, he

showed the pictures and told the story. Therefore, as all the missionary societies heard it, the Congo Balolo Mission director could not keep quiet about those atrocities. So, he was the first to alert the world with his photographs about what happened in Congo. He came from the Faroe Islands to the North Sea, in the north of Scotland, and his story was only discovered by a writer and fisherman who then wrote this about Daniel Jacob Danielson, now known. Danielson was also supported by another famous Congo Balolo Missionary: John Harris, who was living in the same Congo area, whose wife, Seeley Harris, is famously known for having pictured some of those atrocities. She was a photographer, had a very good camera, and took photos of those atrocities. As they were living at the mission station of Maringa, one day she was surprised to see a man coming in with the

hands and feet of his daughter killed, and she took the picture on the veranda of their house. That was in 1904. She sent the photographs back with another missionary who returned to London.

Did he have any contact with Edmund Morel?

Edmund Morel heard about Danielsen and Harris's pictures.



Leopold II's atrocities: women captured and chained up so that their husbands would return with rubber

When the Harris returned to Britain, they worked together with Morel, who founded, on 23 March 1904, in Liverpool, the Congo Reform Association and organised conferences specifically in the USA and the United Kingdom, and the world became aware of the atrocities in Congo by Leopold II. Danielsen and Harris's pictures alerted and mobilised public opinion about the Congo atrocities, while the Casement report

mobilised politicians for the cause of the Congo and brought political change, while Danielsen and Harris's photographs brought the social one. What is important to understand is the role of the photographs. And, Mark Twain in his book, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, put in Leopold II's mouth that: I could deny allegations and everything published in the press about the Congo, but I cannot deny what is shown on the photographs. And, as you know, Leopold II gave up his ownership of the Congo, which became the Belgian Congo in 1908. And that was because of the work of the protestant and the catholic missionaries, even if this role is not much mentioned and told. The reason is that the attitude in Britain has changed. In the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, there was a vast movement of revivals and enthusiasm about evangelisation overseas. But, during the fifties and sixties, that support decreased till now. With the new world, the televisions and the media, people from Europe and Britain became much more humanist than religious; they were much happier and enthusiastic to help where people are suffering from hunger, where they do not have

good health and medical conditions and lack of education and school, than to support the evangelisation and the promotion of Christianity. In the Congo, after independence, the Churches and Christianity have taken root; Congolese themselves now own their Churches and are living their own Christianity as missionaries trained and educated Congolese who are doing well and are solving the new problems and challenges. For example, around the independence, missionaries, Catholics and Protestants understood that it became important to create secondary schools, so, in the area of Maringa, primary schools' buildings changed to accommodate secondary ones and even a special building used for the leprosy near Maringa, as during those years, the leprosy was not any more a massive tropical and health issue, the building was appointed for training local pastors by teaching them theology. As the Catholics created the Lovanium University in Leopoldville with the support and partnership of Leuven Catholic University in Belgium, Protestant missionaries also decided to unite: they founded the Protestant University of Stanleyville, now Kisangani. The missionaries believed that they successfully achieved their goals, especially because the secondary schools, universities and theology faculties, as those new structures they founded and built, were properly managed by the Congolese themselves. The health care problem remains an issue because when the Congo became independent, there were no Congolese doctors; the missionaries also did not train doctors. But also, the weakness of the Western and European missionaries was that they came to Africa, trained and baptised Christians, and built churches, buildings, schools and universities, but unfortunately, they remained dependent on the financial support from Europe and the West. And, when the missionaries left, the money also left! Of course, the Congolese themselves must start thinking and finding new ways of sustaining themselves, questioning what the missionaries have not achieved so that they could achieve it, and also creating some new financial approaches by avoiding remaining dependent on the usual Western, American, and European supports. When I was writing this book, I also wanted a Congolese opinion on missions and missionaries. Do the Congolese think that the missionaries were good or bad people? And I could not find someone from Congo who lives in this country to do that, and that was how you came after that contact to give that side of the narrative; you read the book and you wisely and post-faced it.

I am one of the missionaries' children; they taught and trained, baptised and Christianised me and others. I benefited from them and I always praised them. In a book twenty years ago on my native Catholic Inongo's diocese evangelisation history, I suggest a thought: "the missionaries' breakup times". Old missionaries leave for home in Europe, and those they trained and educated run the local Church with challenges, but hopes and enthusiasm. We have a task and a duty to achieve.

I was looking for new Congolese initiatives, such as the one by Dr Denis Mukwege, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, at Bukavu, as he returned from his studies in the USA, for delivering such an incredibly positive work. That is one of the best examples of the good work of the missionaries, as he is himself the child of the missionaries. I also found another example at Basankusu. I met in London, Rene Lingofi, born in Luaka; he is from Basankusu and was educated by the catholic to become a missionary. He changed his mind when he came to this country and is now an expert in ICT. Back home in Congo, his father and his brother have a small palm oil plantation. So, they expanded it. The concept is that they will produce palm oil that they could sell in Kinshasa, and the profit will be sent to Basankusu to support children and provide vocational education so that they can be properly trained and taught. It is a good initiative of the Congolese diaspora to give back something to the Congolese. If one needs to learn about it, one could visit *lingofi.com*.

What about those missionaries' children, your friends born in the Congo or from missionaries who served in the Congo? Do you have an organisation for meetings and sharing stories?

No. We do not have such an organisation. But there is a chapter in this book with stories of those now living in the USA, Canada, Australia, etc. There is something to remember. Most of those children could have a kind of psychoanalytic reaction against their parents because they were most of the time left alone, without them, for many years, as they were working as missionaries in the Congo or abroad. It was not an easy life for children when parents were dedicated missionaries. Most of our missionaries' parents left Britain for the Congo for many years. Their children stayed with their friends.



Chap XI. AND NOW... From Red Rubber to Red Coltan: The Ongoing Congo Omerta...

THE MEDIA RARELY report on the wars and deaths in the Congo, keeping the world in the dark. Instead, they seem far more interested in the chimpanzees and mountain gorillas of eastern Congo's Virunga Park crossing borders or returning from Rwanda than in the rape of Congolese women. Focusing on the struggle and victory of **EDMUND DENE MOREL** and his **CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION, CRA** against the atrocities of Leopold II's Congo, the "**Bo' Biso**" project aims to mobilise Congolese and 'Congophiles' to take advantage of such a historical opportunity and the organisational contribution of one person, Morel, to lobby and raise awareness for an end to the ongoing Congo wars: it's often better to improve existing actions than to create new ones. As the history of humanity is snaked with repeated tragedies. Since 1996, a genocide similar to that of Leopold II a century ago has been taking place in the Congo, killing millions. Yet UN reports, such as the "**MAPPING REPORT**"¹⁰⁶, which identifies these alleged genocidaires, but the law of *omertà* protects them.

The same causes lead to the same effects

The "**BO' BISO**" project also aims to inspire multiple champions for the Congo cause, using Morel and his CRA as a model: a journalist who successfully brought to his knees a powerful monarch, Leopold II, cousin of the British monarch; proof that any new-look Congolese David can defeat any new-look Goliath. And to add to the similarity and symbolism, Morel quickly understood that if the king of little Belgium could exploit and genocide the almost continental Congo—the parallelism of little Rwanda, with a surface area similar to that of Belgium, could thus bring the vast Congo to its knees—the

¹⁰⁶ Led by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the DRC mapping human rights violations 1993–2003 team's 550-page report describes 617 alleged incidents occurring in the DRC between March 1993 and June 2003; it claimed that the victims of the 1994 Rwandan genocide may be culpable for committing genocide in the Congo. Unfortunately, no one seems ready to implement its recommendations.

elementary logical conclusion is that of the Congolese proverb: “*A chick, no matter how big, cannot fill a pot; if a chick is said to have filled a pot, there must be a hen underneath, and a big one at that*”. Therefore, Morel set up a network of writers, celebrities and patrons to launch his campaign. He devised a “SOFT POWER” lobbying tactic, initially targeting the British Parliament and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Primate of the Anglican Church, and, most importantly, his approach was that, since the USA was the first power to support Leopold II’s Congo Free State at the 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, any change in the Congo could only happen if the same USA supported it: the Congo’s cause got a boost when the American president Theodore Roosevelt Jr. welcomed Morel to the White House. We must adopt the same Morelian approach to raise awareness about the necessity of ending the new Congo wars and ushering in an era of peace.

Blood Rubber to Blood Coltan via Blood Uranium

Like Leopold II, who turned his Congo adventure into a lucrative rubber exploitation in which ten million Congolese lost their lives, and the Belgians¹⁰⁷ who continued in the same direction as they pocketed the benefits of the sold Congo’s uranium to the US, Rwanda and Uganda, mainly, have transformed the Congo their cash cow, in which also almost ten million Congolese died: their 1996-1997’s invasion coincided with the development of the laptop and smartphone industries, which required **COLTAN** abundant in eastern Congo. Since every war needs money, it certainly enabled the invaders, led by the Rwandans, to pay their Congo war bill with the natural resources that the multinationals negotiated through them,

¹⁰⁷ Belgium set up the ‘Union Minière du Haut-Katanga’ (UMHK), now Gécamines, in 1906, to exploit Katanga’s copper, cobalt, etc. and uranium from Shinkolombwe near Jadotville (Likasi). The US used Congolese uranium for its first atomic bomb and civilian purposes: its nuclear power stations for electricity: Edgard Sengier, director of the UMHK, supplied them supplied 3/4 of the needed uranium and pocketed 2.5 billion dollars, and a nuclear technology centre in Mol, Congo benefited a nuclear reactor at the Lovanium University. The USA used its atomic bomb, which killed 150,000 people in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to demonstrate its greatness in the face of the USSR than to end the war, since Japan was no longer a threat, as Hitler had already died in April and Germany signed its surrender: on 7 May in Reims in France and on 8 May, on the USSR request, in Berlin in 1945.

acting as their new local policemen, instead of the Congolese themselves, who carried a negative reputation that the Rwandans continue to spread as corrupt people who don't know how to talk business. Since 1996, eastern Congo has been mortgaged through proxy rebellions, acting as a safety valve for foreign investment, and Rwanda is now emerging as the largest exporter of coltan, even though its soil does not produce it. Today, **“blood/red coltan”** plays the same macabre role for the Congolese as yesterday's **“blood/red rubber”** of Leopold II and Belgian **“blood/red uranium”**, all of which mean and are equal to the Congolese graves. If Brussels bears the marks of Congo's exploitation, Rwanda's capital, Kigali, also seems to have an entire district with the sobriquet (official or unofficial?) “Merci Congo” (Thank you, Congo):

“In the year 2000, there was a real coltan rush. Nokia and Ericsson were planning to launch a new generation of cell phones, while Sony was about to market its PlayStation 2 (which the company had to delay due to a contraction in coltan supply). In less than a year, the price of the ore has risen tenfold, from thirty to three hundred dollars a pound. Only the eastern Congo, where a vein exists, mined this material globally. Despite serving as a significant source of revenue for the other country, the Congo bore the brunt of this burden. A weak state with rich soil is destined to encounter difficulties. Rwanda controlled all the coltan mines. In 1999 and 2000, Kigali exported the equivalent of \$240 million worth of coltan per year. Most of the time, this trade resulted in a positive net profit. [...] However, Rwanda and Uganda were not the only countries to benefit most from the plundering of raw materials in eastern Congo. [...] Kagame and Museveni were not at the end of a supply chain. Those who profited from stealing raw materials from the Congo were multinational mining groups, obscure airline companies, notorious but elusive arms dealers, and shady businessmen in Switzerland, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Germany”¹⁰⁸.

Omertà

The post-Enlightenment's humanist Europe is ashamed of the history of the slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism, and beats its chest every time someone revisits this past. The latest revelations

¹⁰⁸ Van Reybrouck (2012: 489-490).

by the French-Lebanese lawyer Robert Bourgi are proof of this, as for decades, he carried secret missions to transport millions of dollars from African presidents Omar Bongo, Mobutu Sese, Sassou Nguesso, Blaise Compaoré, Alpha Condé and even Laurent Gbagbo to French Presidents; he finally decided to clear his conscience (before his death) by gutting the boa, stories that shock any conscience: Omar Bongo, who, despite having millions and even the right to appoint ministers in France, found himself a *persona non grata* in France at the end of his life; Mobutu, for whom France was a second country, was refused a visa to receive last medical treatment and operation in France, and Laurent Gbagbo, who won the elections in Côte d'Ivoire, but was “vitrified” (Sarkozy used word according to Bourgi) by Sarkozy, sent to the Internal Criminal Court, remained there for ten years and was finally released, have also given millions in cash, transported in suitcases, to French Jacques Chirac who asked him them, the latter phoned him that he was not ungrateful! And the same France ousted him later!

Just as Belgium is ashamed of their Leopold II's bloodiest legacy, none of the multinational smart phones and laptops businesses could hide tomorrow for not being warned that, as in the past with the Congolese rubber in car and bikes tyres, there are Congolese blood drops, most from innocent, who don't know why people are fighting for, and from raped women in these everyday objects.

Today, we have better reports of the massacres in eastern Congo than of the abuses committed by Leopold II. But the main source of frustration is the unjustified and non-permitted law of omertà, which seems to be the guiding principle for the ongoing atrocities in the Congo, counterbalanced by updated testimonies such as the Congolese gynaecologist **Dr Denis Mukwege**'s words on the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize he shared with Iraqi Nadia Murad's ceremony:

“On the tragic night of October 6, 1996, rebels attacked our hospital in Lamera, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. More than thirty people were killed. They massacred patients at close range while they were in their beds. Staff, unable to escape, met their untimely demise. I could never have imagined that this was only the beginning. Forced to leave Lamera in 1999, we set up Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, where I still work today as an obstetrician-gynaecologist. The first patient admitted was a rape victim who had been shot in the genitals. The macabre violence knew no bounds. Unfortunately, the violence never stopped. (...). My name

is Denis Mukwege. I come from one of the richest countries on the planet. Yet the people of my country are among the poorest in the world. The disturbing reality is that the abundance of our natural resources—gold, coltan, cobalt, and other strategic minerals—is the root cause of war, extreme violence, and abject poverty. We love beautiful cars, jewellery, and gadgets. I personally have a smartphone. These items contain minerals found in our country. Young children often exploit these minerals in inhumane conditions, becoming victims of intimidation and sexual violence. When you drive an electric car, use your smartphone, or admire your jewellery, take a minute to reflect on the human costs of creating these objects. Let's, as consumers, ensure that the manufacturing of these products respects human dignity. Ignoring this tragedy amounts to complicity. (...). With this Nobel Peace Prize, I call on the world to bear witness, and I invite you to join us in putting an end to this suffering that shames our common humanity. The people of my country are in dire need of peace”.

Rwanda exports coltan worth USD 240 million.

All reports denounce the financial gains of foreign countries exploiting Congolese minerals made in a country that has become a ‘self-service state’. Until then, Rwanda and Uganda had maintained a constant presence in Congo, exploiting and controlling it through rebellions forged and operated exclusively in these eastern mining areas. They exploited the power-hungry Congolese politicians, tempting them to become warlords. According to all reports, Rwanda earned \$240 million from the sale of coltan from Congo. Unlike the Congolese, the Rwandan regime of Kagame, which is the real power broker of these rebellions, effectively sells the narrative and ideology of the Tutsi genocide, omitting any mention of Hutu and Twa deaths and labelling anyone who questions this version as a revisionist. Intriguingly, the bombing of Habyarimana’s plane on 6 April 1994, the wars and rapes in the Congo and the deaths of Rwandan refugees in Congolese forests during that Rwandese invasion all fall under an ‘empire of silence’. And, similar to what happened to AFDL, Rwanda continues to create rebellions by proxy, each time assuming a different identity. The most recent is Laurent Nkundabatware’s transformation of the CNDP into the M23 rebellion, which Rwanda supports. Can Corneille Naanga, who ironically served as the former president of Congo’s Independent National Electoral Commission

(CENI), convince that his newly formed ‘Alliance Fleuve Congo’ (AFC) rebellion is not a Rwandan proxy invasion?

The usual casus belli: “Banyamulenge” and “FDLR”

Until then, Paul Kagame had always claimed that he was fighting in eastern Congo either to protect the Congolese Rwandophones, also known as the Banyarwanda, or for Rwanda to regain its pre-colonial lands, which the ill-drawn colonial borders had granted to Congo, and also to wipe out the ‘Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda’, FDLR, Habyarimana’s former Hutu soldiers still hiding in eastern Congo, whom Kagame has never fully arrested despite the thirty years of war during which Rwanda controlled that part of Congo. Nothing could be more fabulous!

While respecting colonial borders is a sacrosanct principle of the former OAU and now the African Union, and that the borders between Congo and Rwanda have already been corrected and settled by international treaties, it is also undeniable that several waves of Rwandese have migrated, with records of their presence in the Ruzizi area of eastern Congo dating back to 1896, when a group opposed to the Rwandan monarchy set out for Congo, and also that the main Rwandese migration to the Congo happened during the colonial years with the ‘Mission d’Immigration Banyarwanda (Hutu and Tutsi)’ (MIB) started in 1937 as after Germany’s WWI defeat, Belgium administrated Rwanda and Burundi, two former German colonies. Also, as a result of the pogroms and inter-ethnic massacres between Hutu and Tutsi, particularly between 1960 and 1970 during Rwanda’s independence period, the Belgians played the game of divide and rule, pushing the two tribes against each other. Contrary to their usual colonial policy of promoting the Tutsi, inoculating them with the cliché that they had to rule the Hutu majority, they shifted their support to the Hutu majority, which in turn led to the stigmatisation of the Tutsi and vice versa: they began to massacre each other on an incredible scale.

The documentary film directed by Henry Brandt, *‘La Ligue des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge présente Opération Banyarwanda’*, shows how the Red Cross, requested by UNHCR, officially resettled Rwandans, mainly Tutsis, to eastern Congo in March 1962, in Mulenge, Katobo, Lemera, and Minembwe, 80 km from Bukavu, lands report said a new paradise where they built villages, grazed

their herds and started farming after reaching an agreement with the traditional chiefs¹⁰⁹. Years later, in the 1970s, the Banyarwanda of South Kivu gave themselves the nickname “Banyamulenge”, which is not a new Congolese tribe, but means “those who came from/live in Mulenge”. Having lost their Zairian nationality in 1992, which they had previously acquired unconstitutionally and collectively, most of them, especially the youth, moved to Rwanda to avoid becoming stateless. Along with others, they joined the Rwandan RPF, led by Paul Kagame, and participated in the Congo’s 1996 invasion. There is no doubt that certain Banyarwanda have been separated and found either in Congo, as other tribes in other border countries, because of colonial borders, just as there are Kinshasa/Brazzaville Congolese Bateke, Angolan/Congolese Bazombo, Brazzaville/Kinshasa Bakongo, and so on. But does this have to be a reason to kill each other over land rights? The problem is more geopolitical than real, especially as African tribes and ethnic groups have their own conflict resolution mechanisms that could be activated smoothly, as did the Baluba in the 1960s in Kasai province.

The presence in Congo of former Habyarimana Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), some of whom are suspected genocidaires and linked sometimes, according to some reports, to the Congolese government during some battles, is another headache and alibi that President Paul Kagame usually mentions. Even if they existed, their numbers would have dwindled over time, and as they age, it’s unclear how many remain. But, Rwanda has maintained control of eastern Congo since 1996 without eliminating them. Worse still, every time a peace agreement is signed between Congo and Rwanda, the latter Rwanda invokes this imaginary threat, never recalling the other facts that sweep the first aside: Rwandan officers and soldiers have been appointed to the Congolese army and some are still serving; the Rwandan General James Kabarebe, who was Rwanda’s army chief of staff and defence minister, was appointed by the AFDL to head the Congolese army for a year. Moreover, each time the Congolese government signed a peace agreement with the rebel groups, including the RCD and the MLC, which Rwanda and Uganda supported in particular, the brassage operations brought Rwandans into the Congolese army. Thus, instead of

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ST2msrOv3Qc>, [Visited on 9 Sept 2023].

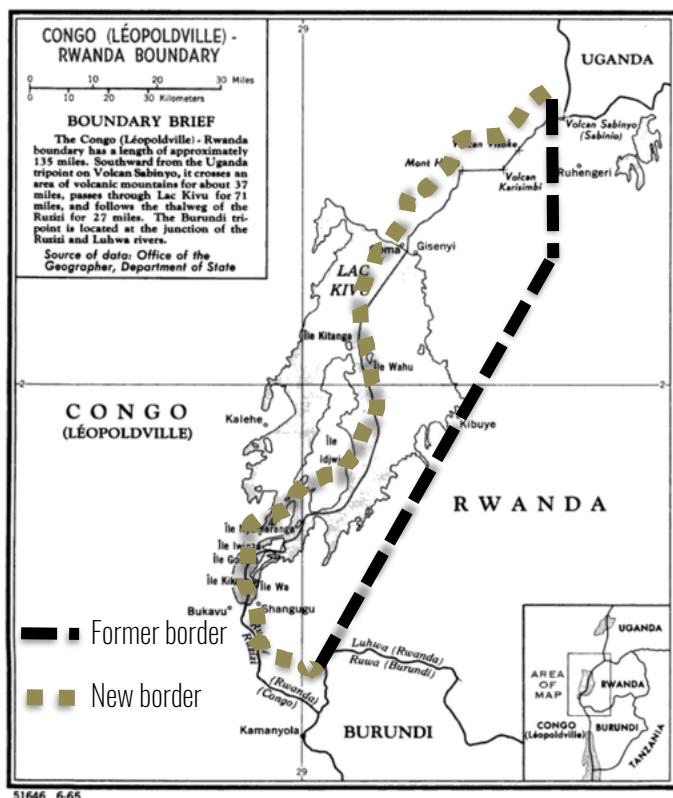
blaming the former Kabila regime alone, it is the allies of the current Congolese government—the former RCD and MLC rebels—who must be held responsible for the presence of these foreigners in the Congolese army. Rwanda benefited from the weakness of the Congolese regime, which never frightened Rwanda, especially as Rwanda and Uganda had previously supported Congolese politicians, leaders and rebels. A vicious circle, as Balufu Bakupa-Kanyinda, a Congolese filmmaker and academic, observed it: “*The Congolese have lost respect. I think a weak Congo suits many people in the region. Congo’s neighbours are eager to exploit its resources*”. Congo’s neighbours are eager to exploit its resources.

Alleged Rwandan lands plundered by the DR Congo.

Another issue affecting Congo-Rwanda relations is the Rwandan officials’ claim, when they are bitten by who knows what fly, that the colonial borders made Rwanda lose its lands to Congo, as the Rwandan kingdom included eastern Congo. This is a blatant lie, which the Congolese respected professors **Isidore Ndaywel** and **Tshibangu Kalala** have clearly and scientifically “map-evidenced”¹¹⁰. And, admittedly, when Africa was carved up from 1885 onwards, some of the new colonial states were smaller than others, such as the German colonies of Rwanda and Burundi. As the journalist Dieudonné Kwebe-Kimpele pointed out in an interview, Rwanda (and Burundi) could never lose their lands to Congo because Germany had colonised both long before 1885, a great power at the time, which Belgium was not, so the latter could never take German lands. While the opposite was possible and doable. All historical colonial maps show that in 1884, Lake Kivu and the lands between the now Rwandan towns of Ciangungu, Nyakunda and Gisenyi belonged to the Congo. On 15 May, 11 August 1910 and 25 October 1911, Germany and Belgium definitively established the eastern borders of the Belgian Congo with German Rwanda and Burundi: from Lake Tanganyika, the Ruzizi became the natural border with Burundi, while with Rwanda, Lake Kivu was divided in two, Idjwi island being returned to the Belgian Congo which

¹¹⁰ Ndaywel, I., « Une partie du territoire rwandais actuel appartenait au Congo », <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F0EzaC5r0o8> and Tshibangu Kalala, T., « La vérité sur la formation des frontières du Congo-Rwanda », https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3Hh5_Ym8Ug, [Acc. on 23.03. 2025].

Lost Ciangungu, Nyakunda and Gisenyi going to German Rwanda. More importantly, Belgium and Germany agreed that the populations, thus this new border's demarcation, have separated, would be free to decide within six months whether they wanted to be Belgian Congolese or German Rwandans. As the Belgians in the Congo were less brutal than the Germans in Rwanda, most decided to settle and moved into the Congo lands, particularly in the Ruthuru territory.



Even about a Rwandan kingdom stretching as far as the Congo, that kingdom extended only as far as the centre of present-day Rwanda. And that, the most quoted conquests in eastern Congo, particularly those of the powerful Rwandese king, Mwami Kigeli IV Rwabugiri, who reigned from 1867 to 1895, were more economic raids than annexations. It was during one of these wars against the Bushi, the Congolese Bashi lands, that Kigeli fell ill and died on the boat taking him

back to Rwanda in September 1895. And, that was the end of the Rwandese royal's Congo adventure!

Genocide... The six-day war in Kisangani

Sadly, innocent Congolese are still paying the price for the redistribution of geo-strategic cards: The ongoing mass rape of women, making Congo the world's rape capital, as recognised by the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Congolese Dr Denis Mukwege; the 'Compagnie Aérienne Congolaise', CAL, civilian plane the 'Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie', RCD, the first post-AFDL pro-Rwandan rebellion, shot down in Kindu in October 1998 and the same rebellion which massacred 802 Congolese in Makobola and 856 in Kasika near Uvira as they refused to join them, the unforgettable macabre war between the Rwandan and Ugandan armies in Kisangani from 5 to 10 June 2000, which left 1,000 Congolese dead and 3,000 wounded: the evidence of the Congolese spoils share between Uganda and Rwanda. Rwanda eventually ousted Uganda and took control of the diamond trade.

Under the shadow of Leopold II

A parallel must be drawn between the current conflicts in the Congo and Leopold II's atrocities. Wiltz has chosen to highlight the lesser-known figures who fought against Leopold II to counteract the frustration, anger and astonishment caused by the atrocities in the Congo, of which the king could not have been unaware, and to prevent the collective amnesia and silence surrounding Leopold's genocide (in contrast to Rwanda, which actively promotes its genocide). To Aymeric de Lamotte, councillor and lawyer of Woluwe-St-Pierre in Belgium, who declared: "*No, Léopold II n'est pas un génocidaire!*" [No, Leopold II is not a genocidaire!], Wiltz replied, "*Why not ten million?*" The most recent figures are much lower. Let's admit it. Even if we divide these arbitrary figures by two or ten, the result remains disproportionate, which underlines the undignified cruelty of the methods of the 'Congo Free State'. "*Regardless of the exact number that history will ultimately record, it is undeniable that genocide, democide, ethnocide and multi-ethnocide have been committed against four hundred different peoples gathered along the banks of the Congo River,*" he continues. This large-scale destruction of innocents was the first documented

case of European “**GENOCIDE**”. Although some argue against using the word “genocide” to describe these acts, they never justify it in this situation. He concluded: “*Leopold was the first to force Congo into the hellish cycle of globalisation*”¹¹¹. And the chain of violence that followed his misdeeds is still in force. If Michela Wrong entitled her book on the end of Mobutu’s reign ‘*In the footsteps of Mr Kurtz*’, is it not right that the French translation of her book on Paul Kagame bears the pithy title ‘*Assassins sans frontières*’? Someone must be responsible for these Congolese deaths!

Geno-cost

Charles Onana, Honoré Ngbanda, Patrick Mbeko, Michela Wrong, Pierre Péan, Boniface Musavuli, the international community and the UN have published documented reports and books on the atrocities of the Congo wars and Paul Kagame’s Rwanda involvement. What is missing is an umbrella organisation or action that synchronises all these voices, such as the Congo Reform Association, to galvanise these struggles and speak out loud and clear. As with Leopold II’s Congolese genocide a century ago, the same *omertà* continues, even with the advent of social media, new communication tools, mobile phones and computers, all of which rely on the blood minerals known as ‘**Congolese Blood/Red Coltan**’ from the same Congo! And once invited to London to further discuss his daily experiences since the outbreak of war at Lemera Hospital in October 1996, and his escape and relocation to Panzi, Dr Denis Mukwege, the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize winner, expressed his frustration at the ongoing tragedies, better reported internationally, and looked away between breaths, his eyes almost lost in the azure as if he was despaired or another inexplicable feeling, probably atrocities pictures flashing and moving around his mind and superposing like a film pictures, before he half-opened his eyes and came to himself:

“I spoke, I cried, I shouted, I prayed, I recounted, I wrote, I received awards, I obtained medals... And questioned: What must I still do for the world to listen to me? I interacted with queens, spoke to kings, met with princes and princesses, presidents and prelates, attended the UN Security Council, visited churches, and was interviewed by famous journalists. This work is undoubtedly just getting

¹¹¹ Wiltz, p. 15; Author’s translation.

started. We, all Congolese, must unite and raise our voices. We must continue to speak, pray, sing, shout, write, and discuss the Congo, our killings, and the rape of our mothers”¹¹².

Morel’s vision needs to be networked with Congolese diaspora youth who initiated the ‘**GENO-COST**’ neologism and brand to commemorate the Congolese genocide:

“The Geno-Cost is an initiative from the Congolese Action Youth Platform (CAYP) for the recognition of the Genocide against the people of D R Congo. This campaign aims to have the 2nd of August recognised as a commemoration day to remember all those we have lost in Congo in our long history of violence. (...). Geno-Cost/Genocost means genocide for economic gains. The word Geno-Cost is a combination of Genocide and Cost. We have chosen this term to explain the economic root/aspect of the genocide in the DRC. This removes the misleading discourse, often led by certain media, that tribal or ethnic conflicts are the root cause of the Genocide and instability in Congo. Through our research on the history of genocide in DR Congo, we found out that the current conflict, which has claimed over 6 million lives, wasn’t the first of its kind in Congo. During the colonial reign of King Leopold II (1885–1908), around 10 to 13 million Congolese were killed as a result of the brutal exploitation of rubber and other natural resources (...). Yet, only a few Congolese are aware of this part of our history. It has been carefully removed from our school curriculum (...). Over a century later, history is repeating itself. Millions of Congolese are killed once again for the exploitation of Coltan, Gold and other natural resources. But, despite more people having access to the internet and modern means of communication, very little is known about this conflict. Our conflict is fuelled by the world’s demand for electronics: Every mobile phone and laptop in the world contains a piece of Congo. It is unconventional to set a memorial whilst a conflict is ongoing; however, the Congo’s current situation calls for an unconventional solution. If nothing is done to draw lessons from these tragedies, history shows us that it is bound to repeat itself. If we do nothing now, very few will remember the millions killed in Congo, not even the Congolese themselves. Setting a memorial day is an important part of our campaign as it ensures that

¹¹² The author conducted a personal interview with Dr Mukwege in London in November 2015.

the history of the current conflict is never forgotten (...). Why the 2nd of August? The 2nd of August marks the beginning of the Second Congo War, also known as the African World War. On that fateful day in 1998, the rebels of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD) launched an assault on the town of Goma with the support of Rwanda and Uganda. This event marked the onset of the most lethal conflict since the conclusion of World War 2. Over 6 million people were killed, and millions of Congolese became victims of systematic rape, mutilations and other forms of violence inflicted upon them. Though this conflict officially ended in 2003, Congolese continue to be killed, kidnapped and raped by militia groups in Eastern Congo. International laws define genocide as any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group (...). Yet to this day, the same international community that said “never again” has once again failed to protect the lives of children, women and men. The International Community has turned a blind eye to the plight of the Congolese people. The Congolese must therefore take matters into their own hands. Through this 2nd August initiative, CAYP empowers the Congolese community in the diaspora and the Congo to recognise the Congolese genocide, commemorate the lives we’ve lost, and actively work on solutions to bring lasting peace in Congo”¹¹³.

The Ongoing Congolese Wars: Genocide or Holocaust?

It is crucial to identify a problem and address it appropriately. Is the war in Congo a **GENOCIDE**, a **HOLOCAUST** or something else? For Charles Onana, there is no doubt that one word describes the millions of Congolese who have died, the thousands of women who have been sexually assaulted, and the children who have wept beside their dying parents: a **HOLOCAUST**.

Many were and are involved in the ongoing war in the DR Congo. But the Rwandan president, Paul Kagame, bears the great historical responsibility of being its mastermind, as he started, planned, decided and is the A to Z’s architect of this war. And what about the millions of Rwandan Hutus that Kagame’s army hunted down in the deep forests of Congo during the invasion? Tim Bucher reveals:

¹¹³ <https://www.genocost.org/about/what-is-the-geno-cost/> [18 Dec. 2020].

“It [this journey] taught me a lesson about one of the Congo’s chronic problems, its lack of institutional memory. The slaughter on the Ubundu-Kisangani road resulted in a loss of life comparable to the United States’ 11 September 2001 attacks, yet in the Congo, there were no repercussions. There was no memorial or historical account of what happened, a court case to hold the perpetrators accountable, or an international response. The miasma of misery in the Congo simply obscured the killings. I wondered what hope there could be for a place if such lessons from the past were never heeded”¹¹⁴.

Beyond concepts, **GENOCIDE** or **HOLOCAUST**, mistakes, war bill, pogroms and mass graves speak, unbearable stories and voices demand justice, as does this online bringing tears to the eyes photos of a woman succumbing to bullet wounds, his unconscious child continuing to writhe, and the on the top of this book of a man escaping in a crew of powerless people carrying whatever they can, even goats and poor bikes, and that, when the bomb and gun machines vomited its anger, he crouched down, with bundles scattered about him, one hand covering his ears, hiding his little girl under his arms, his wife perhaps already taken away by these engines of death! And, that is the 30 years’ evil spectacles!



CARDINAL LAURENT MONSENGWO

(7 Oct. 1939-11 Jul. 2021)

People’s religious leader & voice



DR DENIS MUKWEGE

(Born on 1st Mar 1955)

Peace Nobel Prize 2018

¹¹⁴ Bucher: 247-248.

Conclusion

EDMUND DENE MOREL and his CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION were a risky gamble that paid off. Nothing was obvious as King Leopold II was not just any monarch. And yet, there is a job to be carried on, as from an alternative perspective, a hundred years later, very few Congolese are aware of Leopold II's genocide in the Congo, as there is still an omertà on it. Grandparents only pay lip service to it. Scholars and intellectuals seldom.

Except for the late Marshal President Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu wa za Banga, when he usually managed to get out from the harassment of the international community, led by Belgium, because of his dictatorial regime, he was settling accounts with Belgium: journalists would turn up on national television with Vangroenweghe's book: *Du sang sur les lianes*. As soon as Belgium opened the floodgates of aid and Mobutu could walk on Brussels' red carpets, the book regained its rightful place in a cupboard, waiting for the next Belgium and the then Zaïre diplomatic crisis. And yet, a single word, sometimes less strong, defines what Leopold II did to the Congolese: genocide, with 10,000,000 dead. Worse still, the denunciations and accounts are listed and even available.

The eminent Congolese professor and historian **Isidore Ndaywel**, whose book is the DRC's history bible, once criticised that Congolese leaders, intellectuals, and public opinion remain too event-driven, only waking up on the eve of a historical event or anniversary. Then, when the date and celebrations passed, after taking a few million from the public treasury, with no one to worry about the effectiveness of the actions or to carry out a proper evaluation of what was done, nobody seemed to care anymore until the next anniversary in a year¹¹⁵. Whereas permanent pressure, even a bludgeoning of public opinion, plus a great deal of lobbying, as Morel and his Congo Reform Association did, are important tools and keys to expect any change needed in the pattern of atrocities, human rights violations,

¹¹⁵ For example, no one talks anymore about Lumumba's tooth brought back to Congo and the Lumumbaville. And, with 2025's centenary of his birth, everyone will surely wake up the week before to adorn themselves in neckties and cut their hair to play Lumumba look-a-likes, invading the television with the usual statements like 'we the natives of and original Lumumbists,' etc...

and killings. Following the Syrian diaspora, famous during their country's crisis for its London-based "Syrian Observatory for Human Rights", why not create a Congolese Observatory for Human Rights, inspired by Morel's CRA, to denounce the Congolese genocide *omertà*?

Memories: Tomorrow's Congolese genocide

Collective memory and remembrance must be addressed, especially by learning and listening to oral histories. They speak for themselves and are memories, part of the community's common heritage's jigsaw.

Beyond Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*

The Congolese have limited access to anti-Leopold writings. I'll always bite my lip in shame when my friend **Frederick Yamusangie** introduced me to **Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*** upon my arrival in the UK. Yamusangie¹¹⁶ warned me that making any scholar talk on the Congo to the British without quoting Conrad is a crime of *lèse-majesté*: it is a reference book. While I had never read it in the Congo, nor had any of my friends I knew (until then).

For good reason, African references and narratives continue to rely on neo-colonialism, even in the diaspora. There is still a wall to cross: this Africa and these Africans are divided into post-colonial linguistic zones: French-speaking, English-speaking, Portuguese-speaking, Spanish-speaking, Italian-speaking, etc. Ideologically and academically, these barriers persist. In English-speaking countries, the names of Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, etc., are famously mentioned, but they are less known in other countries; *négritude* is a matter for French speakers; in Portuguese-speaking countries, the African reference point is the wars of liberation, etc.

¹¹⁶ About Mr Frederick Yamusangie, to be intellectually honest, without my more than friend Frederick Yamusangie, I would probably never be involved in the now-famous shared story of the two Congo Boys brought to Wales by the remarkable Rev. William Hughes in 1885. It was his phone call that awoke me at around 2.00 a.m. that he had found in a book he was reading, a piece of newspaper he had read, when he was studying at the University of Kent, about "The Congo Boys of Wales." As we shared that I was immersed in research and history of Henry Morton Stanley, whom I had surprisingly discovered had been born in Wales, where I had just arrived, his call sent me to my laboratory/library and embarked me on the Congo and Africa Institute of Wales.

Concepts such as Pan-Africanism and personalities such as Nelson Mandela are rare enough to cross the Rubicon and become the exception confirming the rule. This is certainly due to the sacrosanct principle of ‘the intangibility of the borders inherited from colonisation’... Books, schools, administration, and justice systems follow the same pathway. Alas! Whereas the fathers of African independence, with embryonic means of communication compared with today’s, successfully broke down this colonial myth and barriers to a certain extent.

There seems to be confusion when the Afro-Americans and Caribbean speak about the slave trade, as they usually don’t take into account Mother Africa’s narrative, as **Dr Olivette OTELE**¹¹⁷ does so masterfully in her books and talks: practices, thoughts, habits said to be indigenous black Africans while reflecting the Western narrative, including clichés about Africa and Black people, many of which need to be updated. When you add reggae and Rastafari, things become complicated as we swiftly enter an astounding cultural and religious syncretism that blends Egyptology, Nubian cultures, African ancestral cults, and the symbols of Ethiopian Christianity, distinct from the established traditions. It’s difficult to find your bearings when your cultural compass feels lost. Naturally, there’s a constant need to bridge the cultural divide.

In the footsteps of Edmund Dene Morel

We have some work to do as we now have the needed and new materials about such an incredible shared history. We have no more excuses and need to blame only our laziness. So it’s up to us to play and above all to copy and paste and adapt Morel’s approaches and methods that bore fruit yesterday with Leopold II brought to his knees by a journalist who had a revolutionary approach: meticulously gathering evidence, especially photos and testimonies, constantly publishing them in books and newspaper articles, organising conferences and public events, to set up a network for this cause (of

¹¹⁷ For her, the transatlantic slave trade should also be approached from an African perspective because the losers are Africans left behind with scars and endless grief and who have also lost brave and intelligent people, princes and princesses, nubile women and so on. In terms of numbers, because of the deaths, the injuries, those thrown into the sea, and those who died of disease, the losses in Africa are perhaps double those who arrived in America.

the Congo) by bringing together all the intellectuals and opinion formers he could get his hands on, benefiting from the paternity and financial support of philanthropists, lobbying Churches and States leaders, including the President of the USA and MPs, and above all, to remain focused on the campaign.

The new Congolese genocide is not far removed from such an almost amnesiac approach (voluntary or involuntary, conscious or unconscious, or all at once!). Concepts are what they are. They have their definitions and acceptances! We must avoid a public opinion that comes to the conclusion reached by Canadian General Roméo Dallaire during the Rwandan genocide of sad memory, which has been the basis of the genocide of the Congolese since 1996: *“Are all humans human to the same degree and the same level, or are some humans more human and others less human than others?”*

DR Congo: Leopold II exorcism, still a long way off

For many observers, this is the bottleneck of modern and contemporary Congo: despite changes in regimes and powers, Congo is still living as if the shadow of Leopold II is still haunting the country's destiny; it is always Leopold II and his methods that seem to return as if history were tinged with fatalism in the country. Every country in the world and every person depends on their history, and the same is true of the Congo and the Congolese, a history that stumbles and staggers and always comes back with the same shadow: very little for these heroic people of the Congo. Like Leopold II, who owned the Congo (he was mankind's largest land-owner by that time), the Congo is always hostage to a few individuals, a group that changes and returns to the centre stage.

Beyond the unfortunate history

Except for the period around independence, when Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected leader, was unfortunately assassinated by the USA and Belgium, for whom an independent Congo was not and is not in their interests; the Congo, Zaire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has never had good leaders, and especially since Belgium initiated Congolese politicians to work against the people for their own pockets... Alas... And the corruption initiated by the Belgians and Americans at

independence to assassinate Lumumba endures and is becoming a new kind of corruption... And much more...

It would appear that the usual Congolese calculators and profiteers, since the Berlin 1885 conference, do not have a vested interest in improving the country's governance and management. In the Congo, the State continues to replicate the Congo of King Leopold II, despite the passage of time. There are lessons to learn and past to revisit: the colonisation must be blamed with the last energy: it was a crime, an evil, a depopulation, assassinations, killings, negation of Africans and Congolese culture and being. Needles, mirrors, medical care, schools, roads and many other modernities and good intentions were a drop in the ocean of inhumanity.

There must be talks on the restitution to Africa and Congo of art objects stolen and brought in the West by colonialists and missionaries; there was talk of the restitution of Patrice Lumumba's teeth, but there is and must be more: the West and African sitting around a log fire and under a tree, looking at each other, face to face, revisiting both common past. The assassination of Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Okito and Maurice Mpolo was a parenthesis of blood and of time opened and never closed in the history of Congo: the wound is slow to heal, the law of omertà endures and persists, while it remains *'the elephant that walks on eggs'*, the title of the first Congolese literary book in 1932 by Thadee Badibanga¹¹⁸.

Some ontological questions need to be dug: Astonishing as it may seem, no country in this world has ever changed its name like DR Congo: Etat Indépendant du Congo (1885-1908), Congo Belge (1908-1960), République du Congo (1960-1964), République Démocratique du Congo (1964-1971), République du Zaïre (1971-1997), and République Démocratique du Congo (since 17 May 1997). The flag, emblems, and coats of arms, along with the names of the cities and provinces, fluctuate with the same waves and nominal instabilities, creating the impression that, even after over 60 years of independence, this country is still in a state of self-discovery or self-doubt. Luckily for any Congolese, only the united and indivisible Congo, for which all Congolese are jealous and never dream

¹¹⁸ Thaddée Badibanga's 1932 first book of Congolese literature, *Luba Tales*, translates into French to mean that when an elephant steps on a viper's eggs, the result is disastrous, as small poisonous vipers spread throughout the forest, causing a disaster, a catastrophe, and an apocalypse.

of losing a single centimetre of land! The Congo and its people are neither orphans nor widows.

The country is a reservoir of changemakers like Edmund Dene Morel and his Congo Reform Association. Every decade, every turning point in its history, every little corner of the country, sometimes when we least expect it, gives rise to these sometimes lonely but united heroes like Pierre Mulele, who started a peasant and popular uprising in his native Kwilu with a pistol. Or Mzee Laurent-Désiré Kabila, who joined the notorious Rwandan, Ugandan, and Burundian-inspired Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaïre (AFDL) rebellion to oust the dictator Mobutu, who had been in power for 32 years. He then outwitted all his accomplices by thwarting their games and proclaiming himself president of the Republic on 17 May 1997. In the Congo, there is no such thing as an undoing. Resilience is Congolese second nature. There is undoubtedly hope for the Congolese community. As Adou Elenga sang in Lingala during the Belgian colonisation of the Congo: “*Ata ndele... Mokili ekobaluka*”—“*sooner or later*”... the world will turn upside down... change will come!

Congo Now: Opportunities and Challenges

This project's outcomes need to be shared with our communities, as “Bo’ Bisu,” aims to disseminate the British Isles/UK-DR Congo’s shared history throughout communities, a foundation for establishing new connections between the two countries, given their existing shared stories, especially as the Congolese diaspora is well integrated in the UK. “*Ubi bene, ibi patria*,”¹¹⁹ stated a Latin proverb. And yet, it is imperative to tell the past so that contemporaries don’t have to repeat certain negativities and mistakes. African contacts with Arabs and Europeans brought technological advances such as the use of penicillin, antibiotics, modern calculators, and modern mathematics, writing, and other innovations; but, undoubtedly, because of the conceptions of the time, there was a denial of African knowledge, culture, traditions, and civilisation, which were scarcely studied and presented as having to disappear in favour of those imported. This gap needs to be filled and corrected. And, despite the challenges faced throughout its history, the DR Congo offers opportunities thanks to its diverse and dynamic

¹¹⁹ “Where one feels good, that is where his country is.”

population, a unique mosaic of cultures symbolised by its Congo River and its tributaries and confluences collecting its waters and flowing through the country into the Atlantic Ocean. This country also boasts vibrant urban centres with potential for investment, a young population with a strong entrepreneurial spirit, and a wealth of natural resources in the soil and subsoil. Its nine neighbours make the DR Congo a masterpiece of African geopolitics. Hence, Frantz Fanon's famous quote: "*Africa is shaped like a gun, and the Congo is its trigger.*" So, interrobang question: "*Why is such a country, with its incredible potential and opportunities, still one of the world's poorest?*"

The DRC's main challenge is its need for proactive leadership with a clear vision for the future, a leadership that inspires as an ethically correct role model and mobilises others around it, and needs to implement an innovative, comprehensive and timetabled modern and global five or ten-year-period business plan.

It is possible that the improvisation from which the country has suffered in terms of leadership since independence, the poverty of the people, and above all, its democracy or the will of its people, each time assassinated or even nipped in the bud, may have some value. It is suggested that the intellectual elite of this country could play a more ethical and committed role in serving as a true participatory power in the management of its public affairs. This could be achieved by implementing standard, normal, transparent and, above all, evaluative policies so that the Congo can truly be transformed into a country, a nation, a state and a republic. Since the Congo is not a solitary molecule but, as its history shows, at the crossroads of world geopolitics and geostrategy, the question arises as to whether the Congo needs a figurehead who does not adopt the role of the 'bad Samaritan' but one like Edmund Morel who, even though he had never visited the Congo, devoted his life to its people?

New leadership

This international or foreigner's goodwill, which must be translated into a win-win approach, can only be achieved with the involvement of the Congolese themselves, who must become true changemakers for their country and their people. *Mutatis mutandis*, the advice of Chinua Achebe in his essay *The Trouble with Nigeria* could be

useful, substituting the DR Congo for Nigeria, as both countries have experienced the same historical challenges:

“The trouble with [the Democratic Republic of the Congo] is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the [Congolese] character. There is nothing wrong with the [Congolese] land or climate or water or air, or anything else. The [Congolese] problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmarks of true leadership. (...) I am not here recommending ruthlessness as a necessary qualification for [Congolese] leadership. Quite on the contrary. What I am saying is that [the DRC] is not beyond change. I am saying that [the DRC] can change today if she discovers leaders who have the will, the ability and the vision. Such people are rare at any time or place. But it is the duty of enlightened citizens to lead the way in their discovery and to create an atmosphere conducive to their emergence. If this conscious effort is not made, good leaders, like good money, will be driven out by bad”¹²⁰

“Causa sublata, tollitur effectus”...¹²¹

About the ongoing war, since the Congolese themselves seem to be on the ropes, with some of them certainly benefiting from this war economy in which their east is becoming stateless, each politician with probably his mining career, a protectorate to defend tooth and nail, the international community, or what’s left of it, as with COVID 19, can play fair, as the British did to end the war in Sierra Leone (1999-2001), because this war in the Congo began with the UN decision for the Congo to open its borders to Rwandan refugees, as the Congolese author In Koli Jean Bofane recalls it. Appearing in the documentary, *Soundtrack to a Coup d’Etat*,¹²² he said at the end of the film: “We have to write our own history. And also, the opening of Zaire’s borders was decided by the West at that

¹²⁰ Chinua Achebe, *An Image of Africa & The Trouble with Nigeria*, London: Heinemann, 1987, pp. 7-8.

¹²¹ Latin’s grammar, absolute ablative paradigm. “*When the cause is removed, the effect disappears.*” The obvious consequence of this philosophical principle is that there is no effect without a cause.

¹²² In Koli Jean Bofane in Grimonprez, J. (Director). (2024). *Soundtrack to a Coup d’Etat* (film), Belgium.

time! That's UN Resolution 929. I still know it by heart. Because on that day I was able to describe the genocide, the genocide, and the genocide, and the Congo war after the genocide. In five minutes. Everyone looked away. There are UN observers. It burns two billion dollars a month. It has stayed here for twenty-five years. That's right, they were there. That's how Lumumba got caught, thanks to the UN. Lumumba was protected by the UN. And it's the same today". How long will the DR Congo remain a prisoner of such an international and historical omertà? Is it because, as Boface quote the Congolese proverb, "*nobody sees the tears of a fish*"?

Finally... People of the DR Congo

Just like Leopold II's genocide in the Congo, the current holocaust will also come to an end one day. Regrettably, neither event will bring back millions of perished Congolese. The international community will be ashamed to bury itself when the work of memory unearths stories, demonstrates complicity and points the finger at the names of leaders and others that history will surely erase. The Congolese, resilient in every way, deserve better. And, about the ongoing war, DR Congo is a victim of its legendary hospitality and of its powerless leaders and lack of long-term vision politicians. Each country fights, closes and guards its borders. It is a matter of life or death. The Congo of today is a small pass.

In the meantime, this book and the 'Bo' Bisso' project focusing on the character of Edmund Dene Morel and his Congo Reform Association can inspire more than one actor and become a reference tool for change in the DRC in search of one or more changemakers.

In his preface to Antoine-Roger Bolamba's collection of poems, '*Esanzo. Chants pour mon pays/Songs for my Country*', Léopold Sédar Senghor wrote a premonition about the Congo: *He comes from the Congo, where there are not only minerals, bridges and resources, but where people live*. It is unfortunate that, when it comes to the Democratic Republic of Congo, its people are often overlooked: 80 million inhabitants. For Marxists, Congo would be a veritable goldmine of labour, and for capitalists, a veritable market of potential customers. Today, the two must be counterbalanced: investing in the Congo means sowing seeds in fertile ground. This was understood by the greatest architect of the modern Congo: the Welsh-born Briton Henry Morton Stanley, who dreamed of a prosperous Congo able to

trade with the whole world, which is the because of why of his famous quote, *'Without railways, the Congo is not worth a penny'*, as he lobbied the British Chambers of Commerce and investment on his return from the Congo he dreamed opened to them, these not having taken the bait (since he was a Welshman and from Nazareth nothing good can come out?). A missing opportunity we can reverse.

DR Congo: more part of the solution than of the problem

The Congolese crisis equation can be quickly solved if the DR Congo is considered part of the solution rather than the problem. Its geostrategic and geopolitical position at the heart of Africa, surrounded by nine neighbours, makes it the crossroads of its neighbours' problems: not only do its neighbours' rebellions spill over into Congo, but also all the Congolese army groups use the neighbours as their backbones, which is a headache. This is what led Frantz Fanon to say that Africa is like a revolver with the trigger in the Congo. Of course, the problem of all these Congolese deportees in neighbouring countries will remain a time bomb because of the politicisation of these refugees. Even the involvement of the UN and agencies, which should be demanded, is likely to bite the dust.

The DR Congo is the epicentre of the globalisation process launched at the Berlin Conference in 1885 and carried out throughout contemporary history: Rubber for the cars and bikes, gold, diamond, cooper and uranium to stop the Great Wars, Coltan for the lap tops and mobile phones, cobalt and other minerals for the electrical car, Congo Bassin for the climate change battle. Let's change the DRC narrative: it's a country with a future, full of opportunities, and home to wonderful, resilient, diverse communities of homogeneous and crossroads of heterogeneous people. When the Congolese resume living in peace, the world will witness such a land where milk and honey flow, benefiting everyone globally. And the world and Africa's cows will also be well fed. Using the same historical heroes and facts as opportunities, let's bridge the DR Congo to the world and the world to the DR Congo, and the taste of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will make you forget China and the Far West; tomorrow's global world miracle has only one name: the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



APPENDICES

Black Achievers Hall: Liverpool Slavery Museum

Any visitor to Liverpool's Slavery Museum is quickly drawn to the 'Black Achievers Hall', with photos of all the black heroes who have contributed to black and human history. It's an inspiring and aspirational catalogue, so you don't have to feel sterile, widowed or orphaned without a role model. Especially as the museum allows any community to add missing names. There are:

Muhammad Ali, USA, boxer and sportsman of the 20th century; **Kofi Annan**, Ghana, first black UN Secretary-General; **Aimé Césaire**, Martinique, co-founder of the Négritude; **WEB Du Bois**, USA-Ghana, organiser of Pan-African Congresses; **Félix Éboué**, Guadeloupe, governor of Chad, mobilised Africa during the Second World War to fight the Nazis; **Philip Emeagwali**, Nigerian computer scientist; **Oludah Equiano**, freed slave who contributed to the abolition of slavery; **Frantz Fanon**, Martinique, anti-colonialist ideologue, influenced black leaders and opinion; **Marcus Garvey**, Jamaica, organised the return to Africa of blacks from America and said to be the Black president; **Martin Luther King**, USA, black rights activist; **Patrice Lumumba**, anti-colonialist and DR Congo's independence Prime minister assassinated by the CIA; **Miriam Makeba**, South African and anti-apartheid musician called "African Mom"; **Nelson Mandela**, anti-apartheid leader and first South African black president; **Bob Marley**, Jamaican reggae man; **Kwame Nkrumah**, first president of Ghana, nationalist and pan-Africanist; **Barack Obama**, first USA Black president; **Rosa Parks**, USA, activist woman who refused to give her seat to a white man on a bus in Alabama in 1955; **Edson Arantes do Nascimento** aka **Pelé**, Brazilian footballer, won three times the World Cup and 2nd sports personality of the 20th century; **Haile Selassie**, Emperor of Ethiopia, anti-fascist and Pan-Africanist; **Léopold Sédar Senghor**, former president of Senegal, co-founder of Négritude; Most Reverend **John Sentamu**, the first Black Anglican Archbishop of York; **Wole Soyinka**,

Nigerian poet, writer, Nobel Prize for Literature; **Toussaint Louverture**, anti-slavery leader and father of Haitian independence in 1804; Bishop **Desmond Tutu**, South African archbishop and anti-apartheid leader; **Oprah Winfrey**, US talk show host and millionaire; **Malcolm X**, American activist.

Other notable figures to be included are: **Mansa Kankan Musa** (1312-1337), emperor of Mali; the richest man in history and **Amo-Guinea Afer** (Anton(y) Wilhelm (William) Amo (1703-1759), Ghanaian and Enlightenment, the first black professor in Germany the Western universities; **Queen Nzinga** of Angola, whose sister led an army of female warriors skilled in the use of poisoned arrows; the **Amazons** ladies army of the Kingdom of Dahomey; the ancient empires of **Kush** and the **Pharaonic black Egypt** described by the work of the renowned Egyptologist Cheikh Anta Diop; the cities of **Timbuktu** and the medieval capital of the **Kingdom of Benin**, whose walls were greater than those of China; **Zimbabwe** and **Monomotapa**; and other heroes and heroines who are the equals of those of the West and the East.



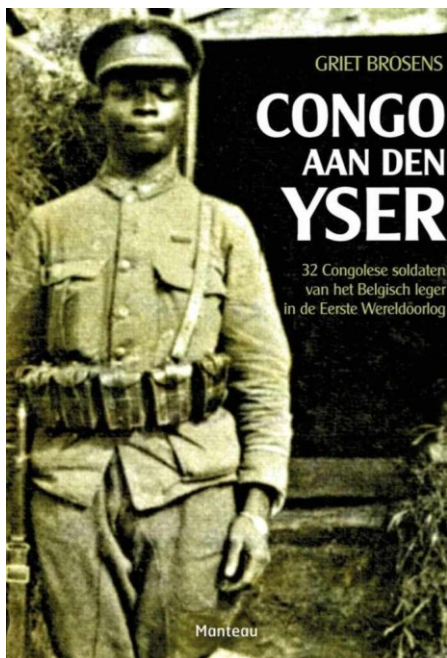
Jean-Jacques MBONDO: WWI Congolese Soldier Buried in the United Kingdom.¹²³

JEAN-JACQUES MBONDO was born in 1894 in Ouaka, currently in the Central African Republic, then part of the Congo Free State. He arrived in Brussels on December 5, 1911, and on August 4, 1914, married Wladislawa Olszewski, surely a Polish woman of Russian origin. Mbondo worked as a cardboard seller while his wife was a tailor at home.

When Belgium was invaded in August 1914 by Germany in the first days of WWI, one of the battlefields of which was West Flanders in Belgium, with its Poperinge cemeteries, one of the evidence monuments of these atrocities, the Congolese Jean-Jacques MBONDO joined the 5th volunteer regiment, becoming one of 32 Congolese from Belgium who served in the Belgian army. Wounded,

¹²³ Lloyd, C., “M’Bondo—the only Congolese soldier to be buried in Britain”, The Northern Echo (January 31, 2018); <https://londonaggiornamento.wordpress.com/2024/01/20/jean-jacques-mbondo-the-only-congolese-soldier-from-the-first-world-war-buried-in-elisabethville-birtley-in-the-united-kingdom>, [Visited on 21 July 2023].

Mbondo was hospitalised in Gant from September 24 to 27, 1914; strangely, because of the black colour of their skin, blacks were all demobilised afterwards, Mbondo included. But he re-enlisted in the Belgian army and returned to the front. On November 4, 1914, he was shot in the right groin during the German attack around Saint-Joris, not far from Brugge. Unable to walk, Corporal “Jack”, as he was affectionately known and named by his comrades, was transferred to Charing Cross Hospital in London. Indeed, as the United



Kingdom was Belgium’s best ally and because of the family ties between the two monarchies, King Albert of Belgium financed four hospitals in England to care for his compatriots injured on the battlefields. In 1915, a small town was founded in Durham County, not far from Newcastle, in England, and named Elisabethville, where a munitions manufacturing factory was set up and also accommodated Belgian war-wounded soldiers, including Jack Mbondo, who arrived on January 2, 1918. Unfortunately, he lived in Birtley Elisabethville for only three weeks because he

died of pneumonia on January 28, 1918. At his side was the Catholic chaplain, the Reverend Petrus Verpoorten. Jean-Jacques Mbondo was finally buried three days later in the Catholic cemetery of Saint Joseph in Birtley (Lees Yd, Mary Ave, Birtley, Chester-le-Street DH3 1JG, United Kingdom). There was no further information about his wife, Woladislawa Mbondo, except that she first lived in Brussels and died in the Belgian city of Mons in 1919.



BRITISH ISLES & DR CONGO SHARED HISTORY SITES

Marked sites of the innovative published and online map “British Isles and DR Congo Shared History Sites”, the outcomes of “Bo’ Biso,” are listed below, bullet-pointed and numbered.

Scotland



1. ABERDEEN (University of): Scotsman Dr **Aaron SIMS** (18?-1922) studied medicine there and joined the Livingstone Inland Mission, LIM (an ecumenical British group, sent to and arrived in the Congo in 1882. In February 1883, he reached the new station of Leopoldville, founded in 1881 by H. M. Stanley, along with fellow missionaries Joseph Clark and K. J. Pettersson. And, assisted by the Congolese he trained in construction and brick making, Sims built **the first protestant**

brick chapel in 1891 overlooking Ngaliema Bay on the banks of the Congo River. It is now the oldest permanent building in Kinshasa and the oldest house of worship in the capital • Professor Dr **Pierre DIOMI Mawesa** (1931-2022): the first Congolese PhD in medicine in the UK, 1969. He became President Mobutu’s physician until the latter’s death on 7 September 1997 in Rabat, Morocco.

2. DUNDEE: Edmund MOREL won the seat as a Labour MP in 1922 (defeating Winston Churchill) and in 1924, and he died just after.

3. GLASGOW: Dr **David LIVINGSTONE** studied medicine at Anderson



University, 1836 & licentiate of the Faculty of Physicians & Surgeons of Glasgow, 1840 • **Dr William H. BENTLEY**: awarded Doctorate by Glasgow University • **Scottish Football Association Museum**: Scotland-Zaire (DRC) 2-0 Jun 14, 1974 World Cup match archives.

4. BLANTIRE (BIRTHPLACE MUSEUM): Dr **David LIVINGSTONE**'s birthplace, Mar 19, 1813 - died on May 1, 1873, in Chief Chitambo's village of Ilala, in Chimpundu, on the banks of Lake Bangwelo, in Zambia. The Livingstone Memorial was built there in 1902.

5. DREGHORN: The pneumatic/inflatable tyre inventor **John Boyd DUNLOP**'s birthplace, Feb 5, 1840.

6. EDINBURGH: Arthur **Conan DOYLE**'s birthplace, Picardy Place, May 22, 1859 • **John Boyd DUNLOP** studied at The Dick Vet, The University of Edinburgh • Jun 14-23, 1910: **World Protestant Missionary Conference** recognised the (Belgian) Congo (DRC) as the biggest missionary field in the world • J. B. Dunlop first 1887 pneumatic tire kept in the **National Museum of Scotland**, Edinburgh • 7-8 Nov. 1903: two days of large anti-Leopold II Congo atrocities conference by **Daniel Jacob DANIELSEN**, a Dane (Copenhagen, Jun. 25, 1871 – Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, Oct. 16, 1916), where his photos of Leopold II Congo atrocities were shown in Europe for the first time. He is not well-known and needs to be mentioned as one of the first anti-Leopold II champions • **Debora KAYEMBE Buba** (of the DRC origin): the first Black Lord Rector of the University of Edinburgh (February 2021-June 2023).



Northern Ireland

7. MAGHERINTEMPLE (near **BALLYCASTLE**, County Antrim, Province of Ulster), **Roger Casement**'s living place after the death of his parents. He studied at Ballymena Diocesan School.

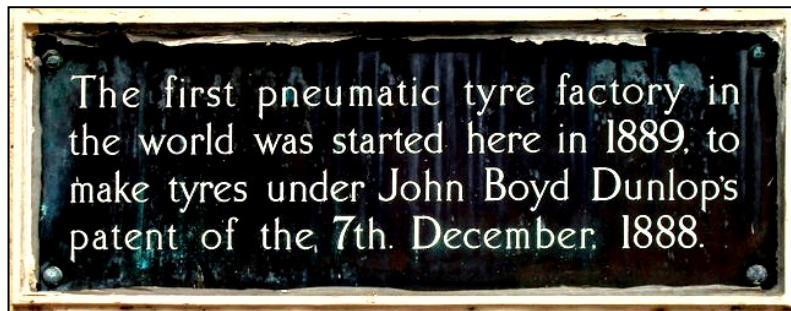


8. BELFAST: John Boyd DUNLOP living place, 50 Gloucester Street, BT1 4PG • **BLUE PLAQUE:** 38-42 May Street, the invention place of the pneumatic tyre in 1887 and patented in 1888 by the veterinary surgeon John Boyd Dunlop. The invention dominated the world after the 1891 invention

of the detachable tyre by the Michelin brothers from Clermont-Ferrand. The Dunlop invention became manna from heaven for Leopold II as the Congolese forests abounded in natural, wide lianas, which, when cut, produced a liquid that, when dried, was the very high-quality rubber prized by the bicycle and car tyre industry. Leopold II recruited mercenaries around Europe to force the Congolese to produce rubber for him: 10 million died as a result of this rubber exploitation.

The Republic of Ireland

9. DUBLIN: Sandycove, Sep 1, 1864, **Roger CASEMENT** birthplace - British 1st appointed as H M consul in the Congo Free State commissioned to investigate about King Leopold II's alleged atrocities and abuses in the Congo, published the Casement Report (1904) and sponsored and cofounded Morel's Congo Reform Association, 1904 • **Glasnevin Cemetery:** graves of Roger Casement, the number one grave just inside the main entrance to the cemetery (+Aug 3, 1916 by hanging at London Pentonville prison) • Grave of **Conor Cruise O'BRIEN** (1917-2008), Katanga (Congo) Special



representative of UN secretary general Dag Hammarskjöld in 1960-1961 • 1852: Birthplace of **Henry Edmund CRUDGINGTON**, an Irish and first BMS missionary to the Congo with Thomas J. Comber. Arrived in Banana on 9 June 1879, they continued to San Salvador and he left on 8 January 1881 with William Holman Bentley (1855–1905), who joined them and arrived in Stanley Pool (present-day Kinshasa) and back to England, set off again, and arrived in the Congo on 18 April 1882. He returned afterwards and died in Bath, England, in 1931 and was buried in Locksbrook Cemetery, Lower Weston, Bath, near his wife • **Deans Grange Cemetery**: Dunlop (+ Oct 23, 1921) grave • **IUNVA HOUSE, The Irish United Nations Veterans Association**, Mount Temple Rd, Dublin 7: where are kept archives and souvenirs of the Irish Blue Helmets who served in the Congo (Jul 28, 1960-Jun 30, 1964) remembered because of the Niemba's ambush when the Baluba killed Irish Blue Helmets on 8 Nov 1960 and the siege of Jadotville on 13 Sept 1961 where Irish Blue Helmets resisted the mercenaries attacks till their last bullet, drama portrayed by the film "The Siege of Jadotville" (2016, Richie Smyth, Ireland) • **BROWN PLAQUE**: John Dunlop 1st **pneumatic tire factory** in the world in 1889, 67 Upper Stephen St, Dublin 2 • **Montpelier House, near Kingstown in Taney, Dublin**, August 11, 1835: birth place of Henry **Grattan GUINNESS**, an Irish Nonconformist Protestant preacher, evangelist and cofounder, (London: 1878-1884), with his wife **Fanny**, of the *Livingstone Inland Mission* (LIM) to evangelise the Congo Free State.

Wales

10. **BANGOR University: Congo & African Institute** archives kept in the university archives.
11. **COLWYN BAY, 1890-1912: Congo & African Training Institute** of Wales founded by Reverend William Hughes, his first two Congo Boys, Kinkasa and Nkanza, officially established on April 4, 1890, by holding the first Congo House Institute Committee meeting. The institute closed down in 1912 • **Old Colwyn Cemetery**: Institute dead students, Rev. Hughes, his wife & their children's graves.

12. RHOSLAN (near Llanystumdwy), Apr 8, 1856: Rev. William Hughes' birthplace.

13. LLANELIAN: Hughes' sister's house; he lived with the boys; 1888: the village grocers' shop was named the '**Congo House**'.

14. CAERNARFON, June 15, 1891: 4,000 people attended H.M. Stanley's fundraising lecture for the Congo Institute.

15. St ASAPH: JOHN ROWLANDS (H. M. STANLEY) placed at the St. Asaph's Poor Law Union **Workhouse** (former H.M. Stanley's Hospital), Feb 20, 1847– May 13, 1856.

16. BRYNFORD School: John ROWLANDS (H. M. Stanley) came to be trained as a pupil teacher at the age of 15 (1856) and left in 1858 for Liverpool/America.

17. HAWARDEN: Edmund Dene MOREL's living place; in 1903, he launched his newspaper *Western African Mail* and published, in 1906, the book *Red Rubber. The Story of the Rubber Slave Trade Which Flourished on the Congo for Twenty Years, 1890-1910.*

18. LLANGOLLEN: Rev. William HUGHES married Katie (Baptist Bethel Chapel) • They moved into their first home, Tudor House, with the two Congo Boys: Nkanza and Kinkasa.

19. DENBIGH: Sir Henry Morton STANLEY's birthplace (born John Rowlands), Jun 22, 1846; baptised at St. Hilary's Church, Feb 18, 1847 • Sir H. M. Stanley's first statue inauguration, Mar 17, 2011.



Statue of Stanley in Denbigh

20. ABERRHOSAN: Reverend Hughes's fundraising lecture for the institute & Nkanza sang in Welsh, English and Congolese languages, Dec 5, 1887 – A memorial plaque in the village church.

- 21. LLANSTEPHEN:** 1901, Deathplace of Sir **Francis Walter de WINTON** (the Congo Free State 1st General Administrator, who officially proclaimed it in Vivi on 1st July 1885).
- 22. SWANSEA:** The copper industry shared resources and expertise with the Zambian (North Rhodesia) & DR Congo (Katanga, UMHK) copper belt.
- 23. CARDIFF: Museum of Wales** - Exquisite snuff box Queen Victoria offered to **H. M. STANLEY** in recognition of having found Dr D. Livingstone in Africa • Sir John William Goscombe (1860-1952) bust of **Chief MBOKANI (Bokani)**, one of the six pygmies from DRC exhibited in Europe and brought by Colonel James Jonathan Harrison (1858-1923) from Brandesburton, East Yorkshire. The six and Harrison embarked at Hull on November 17 and arrived home in Ituri in January 1908. • **St Fagans National Museum of History:** art objects dating back a century brought by Welsh missionaries from the Congo • **BMS Rev. Alfred Tilly, Bethany Church, St Mary Street** (1857-1861), founder minister of Tredegarville Baptist Church (1861-1893), had a vision in 1887 to found a missionary society in the footsteps of D. Livingstone, received finances from the Cardiff businessmen Cory brothers and handed the project idea in 1878 to **Rev. Henry Grattan Guinness** and his wife, **Fanny** who, both, founded, in London in 1878, the ***Livingstone Inland Mission*** (LIM) to evangelise the Congo Free State.

England

- 24. LIVERPOOL: MERSEYSIDE - John ROWLANDS (HM Stanley)** living at 22 Roscommon St, 1858 • Worked in a London Rd's haberdashery; butcher delivery boy in Bramley Moore Dock • Windermere ship captain David Harding signed him as a cabin boy • He finally landed in New Orleans, February 1859, worked for Henry Hope Stanley and adopted his name he added Morton to make it much American • Naturalised American in 1885 • **ELDER DEMPSTER LINES** shipping Cie: Employed Edmund Dene Morel as a shipping clerk in Antwerp carried King Leopold

II's supplies for & from the Congo & Congo/Africa Institute students to & from Colwyn Bay via Llandudno • **HATTON & COOKSON** shipping Cie: Relieved H. M. Stanley's trans-Africa expedition on August 7, 1877, after receiving his letter of August 4, 1877 from the village of Nsanda after he abandoned his Lady Alice boat at the village of Isangila, have struggling walking towards the cataracts: **"To any gentleman who speaks English at Emboma"** • **LIVERPOOL & North Wales** Steam-Ship Cie: transferred W. **Hughes, Kanza & Kinkasa** on a vessel from Liverpool to Llandudno, Sep 1885 • **LIVERPOOL PHILHARMONIC HALL**: Mar 23, 1904: Launch of the **Congo Reform Association** founded by Morel assisted by Dr Harry Grattan Guinness (Aug 11, 1835 – Jun 21, 1910) and funded by Roger Casement and William Cadbury • **INTERNATIONAL SLAVERY MUSEUM**, Black Achievers Wal: portrait of **Patrice Lumumba** (Onalua, 1925), first Congolese Prime minister, anticolonial and independentist, one of the black heroes who inspired generations after his assassination on 17 January 1961 in Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi/Katanga province) with his companions Mpolo Maurice, minister and general, and Okito Joseph, president of the Senate.

25. PORT SUNLIGHT: Lever Brothers headquarters and soap workers' village, founded by William Lever in 1888. He contracted with Leopold II, who offered him lands in the Congo Free State, where Lever founded *Les Huileries du Congo Belge (HCB)*, which exploited palm oil and operated a navigation company, HCB, an ancestor of UNATRA, and now a public waterway transport company: *Office National des Transports, ONATRA*.

26. BLACKPOOL: Anti-Leopold II George WASHINGTON Williams, American Baptist Pastor, historian and Lawyer: died on 2 Aug. 1891, when on the way back to the USA and buried at Layton cemetery.

27. BRADFORD: Henry Morton STANLEY lectured at St George's Hall on May 14, 1891, and stayed with his wife Dorothy at the Midland Hotel.

28. BOLTON: 16 Wood St, William Hesketh LEVER, 1st Viscount **LEVERHULME** birthplace, Sep 19, 1851 (+May 7, 1925)-

founded in 1885 with his brother James Darcy Lever (1854-1916) the soap-maker company Lever Brothers, contracted with Leopold II, owned lands in Congo to exploit palm oil and merged in 1929 with Dutch margarine producer Margarine Unie to **UNILEVER**. Named in honour of Lever, Congo's headquarters, Leverville (now Lusanga) was built on Port Sunlight's model, and it housed the first Congolese publishing house and library: '**La Bibliothèque de l'Étoile**', established in 1943 by the Jesuit Father Jean Comeliau, who arrived in Congo in 1935.

29. MANCHESTER: Oct 21, 1884, **HM STANLEY**'s speech, Manchester Chamber of Commerce, Albert Square Town Hall.

30. BIRMINGHAM: birthplace of **William CADBURY**, Edgbaston, Feb 17, 1867, & deathplace, Bromsgrove, July 8, 1957 - Quaker chocolate millionaire, founder of the Congo Reform Association (1904-1913) with E. Morel.

31. NOTTINGHAM, Newstead Abbey: Dr David Livingstone's disciples **James CHUMA & Abdullah SUSI, Horace Waller, Agnes & Tom Livingstone** meeting place, June 1874. After Livingstone's death, Chuma and Susi buried his heart and organs under a tree, embalmed his body with salt, dried it, and transported it to Zanzibar (1,000 km, 17 days), where it was sent to England for burial; the two disciples followed later in England where they met and stayed with Livingstone's family, helped translate his notes, and were honoured by the RGS • **Sneinton: William BOOTH**'s birthplace (April 10, 1829 – London, August 20, 1912): English Methodist founder with his wife, **Catherine**, in 1865 and first General (1865-1912) of the **Salvation Army**.

32. PITSFORD: Sir Francis Walter de WINTON's birthplace, Jun 21, 1835 - 1st administrator who proclaimed the Congo Free State at Vivi (1st DRC capital), July 1st, 1885.

33. OXFORD: Daphne PARK (Sep 1, 1921–Mar 24, 2010), principal of Somerville College/Oxford University, SIS/MI6 officer in Congo (1959-1961); she said that she also had her Lumumba assassination plan • Death and buried place of **Prof. Thomas KANZA** (1933-2004), DRC first Ambassador who opened the first UK DRC embassy in London (1962-1963) and former Patrice

Lumumba's government delegate minister in the United Nations and Lumumba's personal friend • **WANTAGE, Oxfordshire:** birthplace (Jul 29, 1874) of **John Hobbis HARRIS**, a Balolo Mission Society (CBM) missionary in the Congo with his wife **Alice Seeley Harris** (1870-1970), had a small Kodak Brownie camera and pictured Leopold II's atrocities: there photographs were widely distributed and used by Morel's CRA. When they returned to England in 1906, the Harrises toured the world with their "magic lantern" pictures & lectured in the USA to speak about the Congolese.

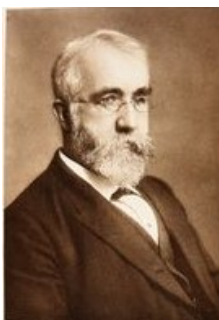


Norbert with Rebecca Seeley Harris, Granddaughter of John & Alice Seeley

34. BRISTOL, Clifton, Dec. 27, 1905: Dr. William Holman BENTLEY (first BMS with Henry Edmund Crudgington to reach Stanley Pool, now Kinshasa, in 1881), deathplace. After prayers at Tyndale Baptist Chapel, he was buried at Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bath Road, Arnos Vale, BS4 3EW. His wife, Hendrina Marco Bentley, died in Eastbourne on December 28, 1938, and was also buried there alongside her husband.

35. BATH: Mineral Water Hospital, Sept 15, 1864, British Association for the Advancement of the Science's Richard Francis BURTON & John Hanning SPEKE preliminary Nile source debate
 • **BRONZE PLAQUE: Dr David LIVINGSTONE** stayed at 13, The Circus, September 1864 September 1864 when attended Burton, he backed the views, what was a mistake, vs Speke Nile source debate • Deathplace and cemetery of Henry Edmund

CRUDGINGTON (1852-1931), first LIM protestant missionary sent in Congo • Deathplace of Rev. Henry Grattan GUINNESS, founder with his wife Fanny, of the *Livingstone Inland Mission, LIM*, (+ Bath, England, June 21, 1910, and buried in Bath Abbey Cemetery).



36. SANCREEDE, St Buryan, Cornwall: Rev. **George GRENFELL**'s birthplace, Aug 21, 1849-Explorer & missionary (+Jul 1, 1906 & buried in Basoko, Congo) – First British Mission Society missionaries to arrive in Congo (with Comber) in 1878, left and returned in Congo in 1880, founded missions of Vivi, Isangila, Bolobo and with his steam vessel, Peace, explored rivers. He accommodated in

Ngombe-Lutete the sick Swinburne from Leopoldville, carried by his two Congo boys, including Disasi. After Swinburne's death, Grenfell adopted, Christianised and travelled with Disasi in his villages to preach the gospels, where Grenfell died in 1906 and was buried at Basoko. Disasi named his son George Grenfell, who became the Secretary of State in Congo's Lumumba 1960 government.

37. NESTON Park, Wiltshire: **John Hanning SPEKE**'s deathplace, September 15, 1864 – First British explorer with his friend Burton to cross Tanganyika Lake and to reach Congo; Speke became the first to map the Nile source, confirmed after by Henry Morton Stanley.

38. BUCKLAND BREWER, Devon: **SPEKE**'s birthplace, May 4, 1827.

39. TORQUAY, Devon: **BURTON**'s birthplace, Mar 19, 1821.

40. FROME, Somerset: **BLUE PLAQUE** (3 Merchants Barton) - **Alice Seeley HARRIS**'s birthplace, May 24, 1870, & her husband Sir John Hobbis Harris's deathplace, Apr 4, 1940.

41. DOWLISH WAKE, Somerset: **SPEKE**'s resting place.

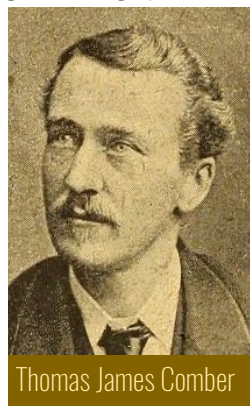
42. RADIPOLE, Weymouth: **Vernet Lovet CAMERON**'s

birthplace, Jul 1, 1844. Commissioned by the Royal Geographical Society to find Livingstone, he met the two disciples of Livingstone carrying his dead body to the coast. He continued his journey and became the first British explorer, after Livingstone, to reach the eastern Congo town of Nyangwe, where he wanted to follow the Lualaba. Unfortunately, no one wanted to accompany him and give him boats. He joined the slave trader and reached the Atlantic at Angola, becoming the first European to cross central Africa from the East to the West: he witnessed and reported the slave trade.

43. SOUTHAMPTON: Dr **David LIVINGSTONE**'s body landed from Africa on April 15, 1874, and was saluted with cannon fire and put on a special train to London for funerals.

44. LEIGHTON BUZZARD, Bedfordshire: **CAMERON**'s death-place, Mar 27, 1894.

45. LONDON. DR Congo Embassy: 281 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1X 8QF; opened in January 1962, 1st Ambassador: **Prof. Thomas Kanza • British & Foreign Medical School**, Aldersgate Street dispensary, Charing Cross Hospital & Moorfields Hospital: Dr **LIVINGSTONE** attended medical classes and clinical skills, Jan 1840 • **30, Sackville Street, Piccadilly:** Apartment rent by his Publisher Edward Marston for H. M. **STANLEY** to finish his book "Through the Dark Continent" • **Golders Green Crematorium:** Edmund **MOREL** resting place • **Camberwell, Claredon Street:** Thomas James **COMBER** birthplace (7 November 1852-Loango, RDC, 27 June 1887). After working in Cameroon with George Grenfell (1876-1878) and back in England, Crudgington and Comber, the first BMS to Congo, left Liverpool in April 1879, arrived at Banana on 9 June 1879, and settled in San Salvador. After visiting Stanley Pool, he died at Loango on 27 June 1887 • **Lambeth North, 1895-1900:** Henry Morton **STANLEY** served as the Liberal Unionist Member of Parliament (Re-naturalised British in 1892 & knighted in 1899) • **Langham Hotel:** Henry Morton. **STANLEY** stayed in before he



Thomas James Comber

MESSENGER built in 1875 to Stanley's specification and who

named it: **Lady Alice • SOAS** (The School of Oriental and African Studies) University: The largest collection of books on the DRC in the UK • **Westminster Palace Hotel**: Last Edmund Morel's CRA's meeting, Jun 16, 1913 • **Wandsworth: 1873**-Rev. Conder's Wandsworth School, Stanley schooled in **Ndugu M'Hali AKA KALULU**, the boy he brought from his 1st trans-Africa trip (+Mar 28, 1877, Kalulu Falls/Lualaba, DRC) • **Harley House, 29 Stepney Green, Bromley-by-Bow**: The Irish Protestant evangelist

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THE ALBERT HALL is two minutes' walk from either of the following Stations: HIGH STREET KENNINGTON, SOUTH KENNINGTON, (both on the District Railway).

BUSES from all parts of London pass the Door.

Rev. **Henry Grattan GUINNESS** (Dublin, August 11, 1835-Bath, June 21, 1910) and his wife, **Fanny** (London, April 9, 1831-Curbar/Derbyshire, 3 Nov 1898, buried in Baslow churchyard) founded in March 1873, the *East London Training Institute for Home and Foreign Missions* and, adopting Rev. Alfred Till vision to create a mission society in the footsteps of Dr David Livingstone works in Africa, both founded (London: 1878-1884) the *Livingstone Inland Mission* (LIM) to evangelise the Congo Free State • **329 Essex Road, Islington**: Deathplace, May 26, 1915 (buried in Abney Park Cemetery/Stoke Newington) of the son LIM's founders Rev. Henry Grattan Guinness & his wife Fanny, **Henry (Harry) GRATTAN GUINNESS II** (Toronto/Canada, October 2, 1861) founded (London: 1888-1915) the



Kalulu in London

Congo Balolo Mission (CBM) for the Congo Free State Equateur province • **Canon Street Hotel:** Nov 7, 1884, H. M. STANLEY lectured on the Congo at the London Chamber of Commerce • **Westminster Cathedral/Abbey:** Dr D. LIVINGSTONE's state funeral on April 18, 1874, in the cathedral and his grave in the nearby abbey, H. M. Stanley was among those who received Livingstone's body at the

FUNERAL OF DR. LIVINGSTONE.
WESTMINSTER ABBEY.
SATURDAY, APRIL 18TH, 1874.
At 1 o'clock precisely.
 Admit the bearer at 12.30 p.m. to the South Aisle of NAVE.
 Entrance by the West Cloister Door in Dean's Yard.
A. P. STANLEY (Dean).
 N.B.—No person will be admitted except in mourning.

port of Southampton, serving as a pallbearer at the Cathedral, and Kalulu carried Livingstone's hat during the funerals. • **H. M. Stanley & Dorothy Ten-**

nant's religious marriage, July 12, 1890 • **Whitehall, BLUE PLAQUE:** 2 Richmond Terrace, Westminster, SW1: H. M. STANLEY's living & deathplace • **1904: Roger Casement** presents his anti-Leopold II '*Report of His Majesty's Consul on the Administration of the Congo Free State*' to the British Parliament • **June 1905:** Six **Congolese Pygmies** J. Harrison brought for the UK/Europe tours (1905-1907), in London on 1st, on stage at the Hippodrome on 3rd, 5 of them visited the House of Commons on 29th • **The Rt Revd Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy:** the first **Anglican bishop** of the DRC diaspora, consecrated on Jan. 25, 2022, at St Paul's Cathedral in London as Bishop of Willesden (London) • The home of: **Albert ONAWELO**, the late first 1960s DRC Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba's cousin & confidante, to whom he sent, from his Thysville prison, his last letters (to his wife Pauline); **Vincent LUTTMAN**, a British with the world's largest collection of Congolese rumba records (≈ 14,000 tracks), and also hosted '*Nostalgie ya mboka*', a Congolese culture



radio programme in London, and of **Kasai Masai**, a professional Congolese modern rumba music band.

45. SHOREHAM, Kent: CAMERON'S grave, St. Peter & Paul churchyard.

46. STROOD, Medway: H. M. Stanley's 1st trans-Africa expedition assistants **Edward & Francis POCOCK's** birthplace. They both died during the trip • **Guildhall Museum, Rochester:** African tribal axe and club souvenirs sent by H.M. Stanley to their father - A memorial for them at Upnor Church.

47. CANTERBURY, cemetery: Joseph CONRAD's grave – Author of the classic English novel 'The Heart of Darkness' (1899). He and his protagonist, Captain Marlow, recount their journey from London's River Thames to the Upper Congo River to track down the cruel Mr Kurtz, whose wooden sticks lining the fence of his



Stanley's grave: St Michael's churchyard.

concession were topped with the heads of murdered Congolese to instil fear and maximise the collection of ivory for King Leopold II. Kurtz died saying, "*Horror! Horror!*"

48. PIRTHBRIGHT, Surrey: St. Michael & All Angels churchyard: Sir **Henry Morton STANLEY** (aka Bula Matari - The Rocks Breaker), his wife Dorothy (+ Oct 5, 1926) & son Denzil Morton Stanley (1895-1959) gravestone and Stanley memorials in the church • Furzehill Estate/Stanley Hill: Stanley's mansion/living house.

49. BROOKWOOD, Surrey, village archives: Sir **H. M. STANLEY's** souve-

nirs, objects & pictures.

50. HORSHAM, Sussex: Anthony Bannister SWINBURNE (c. 1858-1889, Boma) studied at Christ's Hospital school in 1873 and became H. M. Stanley's assistant, travelled with him in Africa and founded, at Stanley's request, the station of Nsansa in 1883 with

Stanley's black agent Abdullah Susi, near chief Nchuvila village. He lived with two boys Stanley freed from Arab slave traders at Stanley Falls (now Kisangani), and left to him, including **DISASI MAKULO**. Swinburne brought them to the UK in 1886, and they returned to Congo. As he became ill in 1889, Disasi and the other boy carried Swinburne on a hammock to Boma. At Ngombe-Lutete, Rev. George Grenfell took charge of him, and he died in Boma; Rev. Grenfell took the 18-year-old Disasi, baptised him, and they travelled to Disasi's home to preach the gospel, where George Grenfell died in Basoko in 1906.

51. CROWBOROUGH, Sussex: Arthur Conan DOYLE's death-place, Jul 7, 1930.



52. DOVER, Kent: Henry Morton STANLEY embarking and disembarking to/from Africa and continental Europe.

53. BISHOPSBOURNE, Kent: The living place of Joseph Conrad, author of Heart of Darkness.

54. BIRTLEY, Durham, Lees Yd, Mary Ave, Chester-Le-Street, DH3 1JG: Congolese WW1 Corporal **Jean-Jacques MBONDO's** (1894-28 Jan 1918) death and buried place.

55. BRANDESBURTON, Yorkshire: 1905-1907 – 6 Pygmies Colonel James J. Harrison brought from the Congolese forest of Ituri arrived in London on 1st June 1905 for a UK/Europe tour and exhibition (human zoos). They recorded a 78 T record, the first by Africans in England. The 6 &



Harrison embarked from Hull on November 17 and arrived home in Ituri in January 1908

56. SUDBURY, Suffolk: BLUE PLAQUE -

Dr William Holman BENTLEY's birth-

place (30 Oct, 1855 - + Bristol, 27 Dec.

1905)—Arrived in Congo in 1879 and set-

tled in San Salvador as BMS missionaries

with Henry Edmund Crudgington back

from the first Congo journey with George

Grenfell, Thomas and Minnie Comber, and

John S. Hartland. In January 1881, Bentley

and Crudgington, the first Protestant missionaries to visit Stanley

Pool, now Kinshasa, Bentley settled in the station he founded of

Ngombe-Lutete with his assistant **Mantantu Dundulu (Ndon-**

zoao) N'LEMVO (c. 1865 in Pawa near San Salvador, in Angola,

+ Kivianga, February 1938) whom he baptised on February 19th

1888, returned to England on 23rd March 1884 with N'Lemvo, liv-

ing in Sudbury at the now Bentley House (in Friars Street), both

visited again England in April 1892 and 1904-1907: N'Lemvo

helped him to publish the *Dictionary and*

Grammar of the Kongo Language as spoken at

San Salvador, the Ancient Capital of the Old

Kongo Empire, (London: 1887), and the trans-

lation of the Bible into Kikongo: *Nkdand'a*

Nzambi.

58. SANDHURST: Antony PAUNI, first of-

ficer of the DRC origin, graduated on August

8, 2025, from the **Royal Military Academy**

Sandhurst.

59. Ashbourne, Derbyshire: Catherine

BOOTH's birthplace (January 17, 1829 –

October 4, 1890, Clacton-on-Sea).

60. Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, Crossley House:

The living place of **William and Catherine**

BOOTH, the Salvation Army's founders.

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Index

A

Æquatoria · 144
AFDL · 33, 334
Aimé Césaire · 339
Andree Blouin · 191
Antoine Gizenga · 136, 158, 169,
177, 192, 193

B

Berlin · 93, 255, 275
Berlin 1885 · 333
Berlin Conference · 15, 93, 255
Berlin Wall · 8, 126, 184, 210
Black Achievers Hall · 339
Black Lives Matter · 74, 297, 303
Bokani · 274, 275
Bolobo · 311
Boma · 267, 294, 309
Bontinck · 145
Bula Matari · 295
Bundu dia Kongo · 69
Burton · 249, 250

C

Casement · 283, 287, 289, 301, 311,
344, 347
CEEBA · 145
Centre Bamanya · 144
CEPAS · 145, 191
Charter of Manden · 38
CIA · 339
Cléophas Kamitatu · 158, 172, 203
Code Noir · 26, 71

Cold War · 8, 33, 100-128, 162-199,
210, 211, 213, 214, 215, 216
Colwyn Bay · 6, 19, 260, 261, 262,
264, 268, 270, 271, 272, 280, 345,
357, 358
Congo Boys · 259, 261
Congo Free State · 15, 22, 90, 93,
118, 260, 272, 340, 344, 346, 348,
349, 352
Congo House · 19, 261, 273, 358
Congo Institute · 261, 268, 280
Congo Reform Association · 1, 3, 6,
254, 281, 283, 285, 287, 288, 289,
312
Conrad · 256, 283, 287, 295, 330,
355, 359

D

Dag Hammarskjöld · 344
Danielsen · 310, 311, 312
Disasi Makulo · 266
Dr Livingstone, I presume! · 249

E

Elder Dempster · 281, 282
Emin Pasha · 267
Etienne Tshisekedi · 196, 203, 209
Evolué · 139

F

François Mitterrand · 211, 221
Frantz Fanon · 27, 335, 339

G

George Grenfell · 267, 355
George Washington Williams · 348

Gerard Soete · 174	Kinkasa · 19, 260, 264, 279
Gilbert Mpongo · 167, 172	Kinkasa and Nkanza · 260
Godefroid Munongo · 158, 168, 173, 174	Kinshasa · 357, 359
H	Kinzonzi · 45
Hawarden · 281, 282	Kurtz · 361
Heart of Darkness · 283, 295	Kwame Nkrumah · 27, 28, 339
Hiroshima and Nagasaki · 273	L
Honoré Ngbanda · 219, 325	Lady Alice · 294
Hughes · 6, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 268, 270, 271, 272, 279, 280, 358	Larry Devlin · 165, 170, 175, 177, 181
I	Laurent-Désiré Kabila · 334
Immatriculé · 139	Leopold II · 15, 22, 30, 31, 33, 42, 84, 93, 94, 109, 252, 254, 255, 262, 265, 275, 286, 287, 288, 289, 296, 304, 305, 306, 309, 310, 311, 312, 326, 329, 331, 332, 333, 337, 343, 344, 347, 348, 349, 352, 367
Indépendance Cha Cha · 22, 160	Léopoldville · 277, 295, 357
Inongo · 359	Liverpool · 248, 260, 262, 263, 285, 286, 287, 345
Irish United Nations Veterans Association · 188, 345	Liverpool Slavery Museum · 339
Iron Curtain · 126, 210	Livingstone · 6, 29, 30, 75, 247, 249, 250, 253, 255, 259, 265, 292, 293, 342, 343, 346, 348, 351, 352, 359, 360
J	London · 19, 248, 250, 253, 263, 266, 271, 274, 278, 288, 291, 304, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 314, 341, 344, 347, 349, 351, 353, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 367
Jean Bolikango · 160, 163, 184	Louis Armstrong · 170, 175, 361
Jean-Jacques Mbondo · 341	Lovanium · 273, 310, 313
Joseph Kasa-Vubu · 153, 154, 155, 157, 158, 163, 166, 168, 172, 181, 195, 196	Lualaba · 250, 293
Joseph Malula · 136, 177, 205, 206, 207	Lumumba · 22, 27, 33, 165, 302, 332, 333, 339, 347, 349, 350, 357, 358, 359
Joseph Mobutu · 165, 167, 175, 190, 197	M
Joseph Okito · 168, 333	Mai-Ndombe · 359, 360
Justin Bomboko · 22, 138, 167, 172, 273	Makesa · 158
K	
Kandolo Damien · 167	
Kimpa Vita · 69	
King Baudouin · 123, 157, 158, 163, 171, 176, 298	

Mansa Kankan Musa · 39, 340

Maurice Mpolo · 168, 333

Mikhail Gorbachev · 210

Mobutu · 42, 100, 273, 298, 303,
329, 334, 342

Moise Tshombe · 55, 141, 158, 166,
178, 179, 181, 186, 197

Morel · 6, 254, 281, 282, 283, 284,
285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 312, 367

MPR · 202

Mr Kurtz · 256

Mukwege · 314

N

Ndolamb Ngokwey · 16

Ndombolo · 62

Nelson Mandela · 27, 213, 271, 331,
339

New York · 250, 255, 278, 357, 358,
361

Nganga · 35, 36, 47

Nile · 250, 293

Nyangwe · 293

O

Oscar PEARCE · 304

P

Palabala · 260

Pan-Africanism · 6, 27, 192, 268,
269, 331

Pierre Mulele · 39, 89, 136, 158,
169, 177, 192, 193, 197, 334

R

Red Rubber · 94, 282, 284, 285, 315

Royal Geographical Society · 255,
269

Rumba · 18, 51-64, 89, 143, 160,
204, 353

Rwanda · 359, 360, 361

S

Sékou Touré · 27

Soete · 173, 174

Soundjata Keita · 38

Speke · 250, 251, 255

St Asaph · 248

Stanley · 6, 15, 17, 29, 30, 75, 81,
247-298, 342, 344, 345, 346, 347,
348, 351, 352, 354, 355, 356, 358,
359, 360

Swinburne · 266

T

Tanganyika · 6, 250, 251

Tervuren · 21, 275, 276, 298

Through the Dark Continent · 251

Tim Butcher · 291

Tim Jeal · 247, 284, 289

Traite transatlantique · 360

Triangular trade · 70, 72

Tshombe · 301

Twin's Ritual · 49

U

Université Libre du Congo · 274

V

Victor Nendaka · 22, 167, 170, 190

Vladimir Putin · 211

W

William Hughes · 259, 261, 279

William Sheppard · 109

Z

Zanzibar · 276, 292, 295

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FRONT COVER PHOTOS

From the top: “Silence, on tue au Congo” leaflet; Edmund Dene Morel; Morel’s plaque at London’s Golders Green crematorium, where his ashes are stored and a Photo of Leopold II’s atrocities by Alice Seeley Harris.

ISBN: 978-1-4457-2439-3

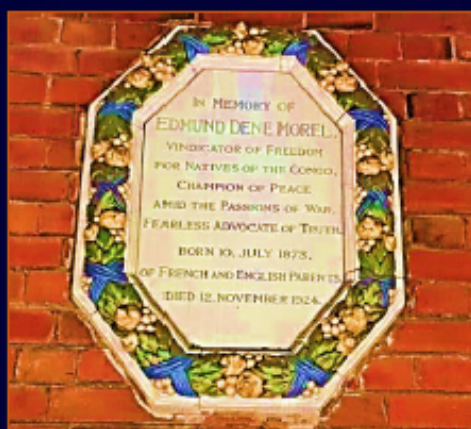
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British Isles/UK-DRC Plaque



Morel's plaque: Golders Green Crematorium

This book is the output from our Heritage Lottery Fund's sponsored project "Bo' Biso": **THE CONGO/UK COMMON HISTORY TASK FORCE REVISITING MOREL (1873-1924) AND THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION (1904-1913)**, the first twentieth-century human rights organisation who won the victory over Leopold II's Congo 'red/blood rubber' genocide for the car and bike tyre industry. It includes interviews, articles, maps, and contributions about the main characters of the shared history of the British Isles/UK & the DR Congo: Dr D. Livingstone, H. M. Stanley, Rev. W. Hughes and his Congo Boys and the Congo/Africa Institute (1890-1912), Roger Casement, etc. Paradoxically, the ongoing Congo's 30-year war and the exploitation of its 'red/blood coltan' for the mobile phone and laptop industry have cost 10 million Congolese lives, equalling the death toll under Leopold II. This requires a modern-day Morel and CRA to fight against the usual omertà.



Born in the DRC (Mai-Ndombe Province) and based in Bristol (England), Norbert MBU-MPUTU is a freelance journalist, correspondent for MNG Radio (Melun, France), and a contributor to many media. Having studied philosophy and traditional African religions, anthropology & sociology, ICT, film, and charity management, and having worked at the United Nations, he is a fellow researcher at the

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Norbert MBU-MPUTU



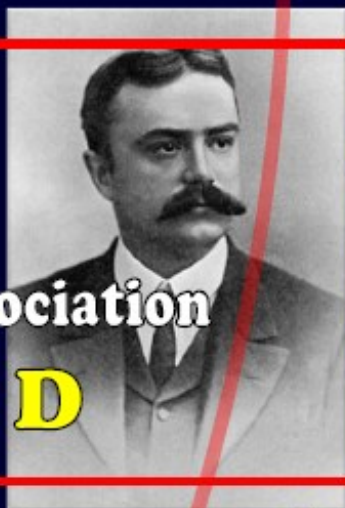
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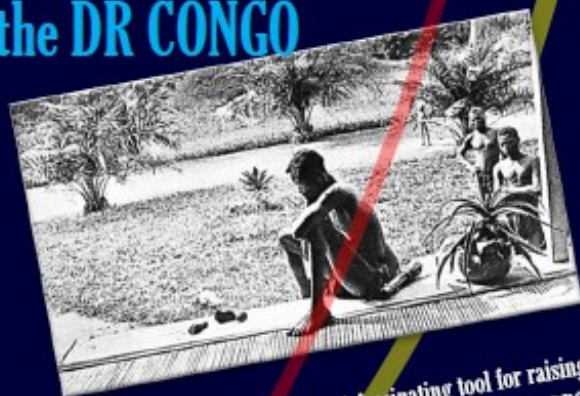
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