



*Columns of mercenary soldiers speeding toward Stanleyville to rescue Europeans and punish leftist African guerrillas*

## **Le Pari Congolais: Whose Congo? Whose Gamble?**

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*"As a result of the rural population's discontent, one encounters a thousand different variations of the demand for reparations in the bush. These demands are made with indefatigable logic - but with bitterness. A spirit of antipathy and defiance is spreading everywhere.*

*The native is detaching himself from our authority. More and more, he seeks refuge from our influence and prestige. The face of the Congo is changing. Belgium is on the way to losing its crowning achievement in Africa."*

Monsignor Jean Felix de Hemptinne, Apostolic Vicar of Katanga, ca. 1944<sup>(1)</sup>

*"I don't suppose history will ever stop giving us surprises; indeed the Congo is supremely a land of surprises."* Thomas Kanza ca. 1970<sup>(2)</sup>

### **Introduction**

Few people over the age of sixty can remember the circumstances that led from Belgian colonial rule over the Congo to the military dictatorship of Mobutu Sese Seko. The fateful confrontation between King Boudewijn and Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba has been forgotten. Columns of mercenary soldiers speeding toward Stanleyville (presently Kisangani) to rescue Europeans and punish leftist African guerrillas only exist in the pages of the potboiler novels that one finds in airport terminals. The televised assault

of Lumumba and members of his cabinet has become 'exotic' footage for late night television. The stoic face of Joseph Kasabuvu and the more bemused one of Moise Tshombe no longer remind us of what might have been if the fickle Congolese had simply let the NATO powers tell them how to be 'independent'. The cartoon character *Tintin*, one of the most unvarnished icons of Belgian colonialism, no longer informs Congolese schoolchildren that Belgium is their fatherland, but asks them to recite addition facts<sup>(3)</sup>. Scenes of Mobutu surrounded by his soldiers or vigorously shaking hands with some

foreign emissary have lost their value as Cold War propaganda now that he is dead. Hardly anyone cares to remember more than a few images of "*le pari congolais*", the 'Congolese gamble'<sup>(4)</sup>.

The overthrow of the Mobutu dictatorship by a coalition of forces under Laurent Kabila two years ago, and the present lukewarm rebellion against Kabila's government, have forced many people to revisit the events surrounding Belgium's hold on the Congo and its tragic demise. Who initiated the struggle for independence - the generality of Africans or the handful of relatively privileged African *évolués* who served the colonial administration and the private companies? Did armies of communist agitators adroitly negotiate the footpaths of the Congo's rain forest to whip up discontent, or did local people, sustained by a belief that their grievances exceeded the capacities of the existing political order, bring down the colonial edifice<sup>(5)</sup>?

Whenever the popular classes of any country declare their aspirations, they also reveal some of the harsh experiences they have withstood. In so doing, they give us a brief glimpse of how and what they remember of the past and how they construct their own 'archeology of knowledge'<sup>(6)</sup>. What they remember may actually coincide with a set of conventional relationships expressed in conventional terms - the 'facts' of the professional historian - but its arrangement and packaging may be disconcerting for those who live on the other side of the social divide<sup>(7)</sup>. The state may also determine that such forms of remembrance are subversive and therefore subject to censure, although it may also take comfort in them, believing them to be relatively harmless however disturbing their mode of presentation may be<sup>(8)</sup>. But why should popular forms of remembrance be thought of as disconcerting - and, under

certain conditions, subversive - particularly if they are too parochial to engender universal pangs of conscience? Such remembrance is disconcerting because it suggests that the deference displayed by the lower classes in their daily interaction with their social betters might be a kind of charade animated by material necessity rather than a set of shared assumptions about how life should be; that the only thing that prevents the lower classes from acting out their version of the 'social dream' is the power of the state's weapons rather than the belief that the material ease and access of the upper classes have some inherent justification<sup>(9)</sup>. The lower classes may envy the upper classes their material advantages, but they are rarely naive about their source. Language is a virtual repository of forms of deference and power<sup>(10)</sup>. It is to this problem that we turn now.

### Language and Colonial Rule

The complementary problems of language and power are an old married couple in colonial settings. We have no better example of the potency of this connection than Shakespeare's *Tempest* - where Caliban, seeing the power of Ariel (language), the mistress of his master Prospero, is driven to take possession of her. Caliban took Ariel too literally, however. He failed to realize that language is a form of power only insofar as it can recall and reconstruct a range of experiences that display how one exercises power<sup>(11)</sup>. As another allegorical figure of Western civilization, Humpty Dumpty, once recalled, language is of no use unless it can designate who is to be master<sup>(12)</sup>. The Congo was no exception. Just who was to be master, and how language animated the subsequent choice, shaped the circumstances of African peasant farmers and wage laborers in Katanga

Province, Belgian Congo (presently Shaba Province, Congo) during the generation before political independence. It found one of its most potent expressions in the establishment of Swahili as the language of the colonial administration and Katanga's incipient urban working class<sup>(13)</sup>.

Initially the spread of Swahili in Katanga and the eastern portions of the Congo was seen as a threat to Belgian sovereignty. Most colonial officials, although by no means all, spoke of the 'movement' of Swahili in ominous terms<sup>(14)</sup>. After the First World War, however, many officials welcomed its proliferation as a sign of popular approval of Belgian rule<sup>(15)</sup>. What made for the turnabout?

Johannes Fabian claimed that the official Belgian embrace of Swahili was an instance of "*intellectual bad faith which signals the submission of critical insight to the dictates of power.*"

But this view only explains the apparent motives of European colonial officials and employers<sup>(16)</sup>. Were not Africans more sanguine or, at the very least, less skeptical about Belgian rule once the prospect of explaining themselves in one of their own languages was encouraged by the colonial administration? Perhaps. But we can never really know this. What we can know is that the language question became a kind of mirror for the colonial administration's perception of itself and those who it was charged with governing. But like all mirrors, it was a delicate balance of truth and illusion.

In 1906, the founding of the Union minière du Haut-Katanga and its vast array of open-faced mines and factories, intensified the competition between Swahili and other African languages from farther south to become the chief means of communication in the workshops and foundries of Elisabethville (presently Lubumbashi), the provincial capital. As industrial production and town life became more complex,

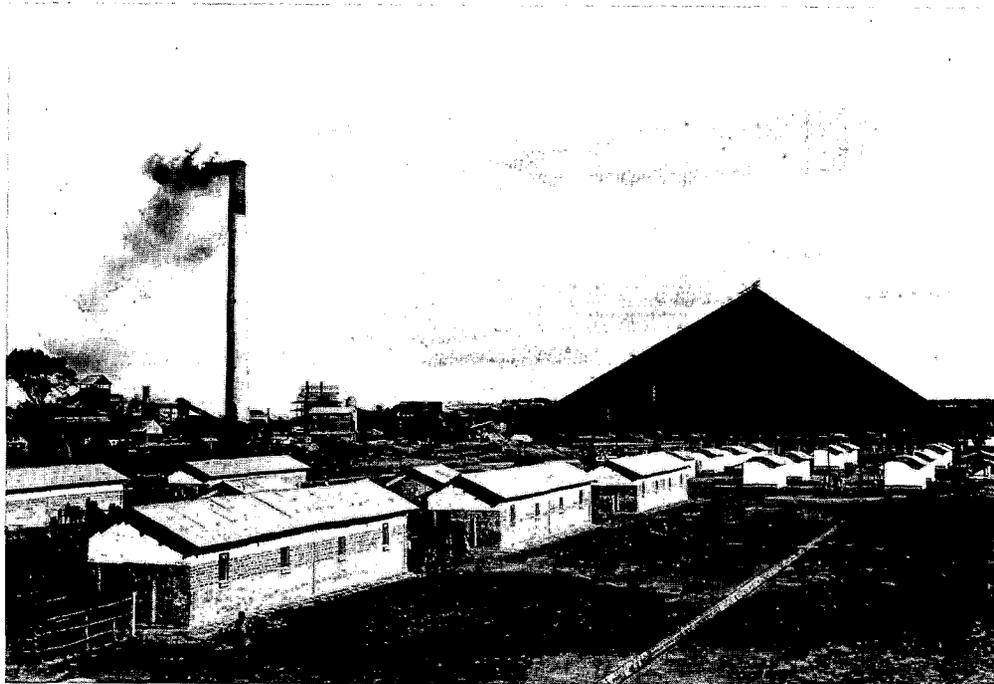
a myriad of competing influences began to affect the kind of Swahili spoken by the African population. Those of class, neighborhood and occupation competed with those of region and ethnic group - so much so, that by the 1920s the major industrial companies - the Union minière, Gécomines, and the Chemin de fer du Katanga - sought to intervene directly in the dialectical transformation of Swahili<sup>(17)</sup>.

The industrial employers sought to exercise greater control over the cultural and intellectual content of working class life. African workers sought a more sustained and reliable means to convey their common experiences. By the 1930s Swahili had become the vehicular language of Katanga<sup>(18)</sup>. After the 1931 labor riots at the Union minière and the adverse effect of the Depression, corporate and government officials came to see Swahili as a weapon within their arsenal of cost-effective techniques<sup>(19)</sup>. Swahili primers, grammar books, lexical texts, and one crudely didactic journal flourished.

Their purpose was painfully obvious: to draw a hard and fast line between the social and the work-a-day world, while simultaneously orienting the forms of expression in the former world to those of the latter.

There were a number of manuals written in a vein that would have been familiar to any mass production worker at the time: "*I hear the bell. I stop eating. I place my chit on the nail. I return to work...*" but the most successful popular literature in Swahili had to be a lot more subtle than this<sup>(20)</sup>. The notices, short stories and advice columns of the magazine *Ngonga* were cases in point.

*Ngonga* was founded by Auguste Verbeken, former provincial commissioner in Katanga, and a group of African évolués who worked as clerks at the Union minière. Verbeken had been forced out of office by more conservative colonial government forces and the provincial



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secret police after the 1931 labor protests. Despite his resignation, Verbeken retained the confidence of a significant portion of the local executive of the Union minière. Consequently, when he suggested the possibility of publishing a popular journal in French and Swahili, in association with a group of the mining company's more educated African employees, it received the tacit support of number of the company's executive officers.

That company officials gave their consent - and some measure of financial support - to such a project during the depths of the Depression was not so unusual. A quick glance at its contents shows that there was a fairly close correspondence between the mining company's objectives and the magazine's editorials. Every Saturday the journal's first page would be taken up by an editorial written in French with boldface type. The timing of its appearance was crucial since African workers only worked half a shift on the last day of the week.

All the editorials were in the spirit of either *L'Union fait la force* or *Pour être heureux*. *L'Union fait la force* appeared on 1 December 1934 and stressed the need for cooperation between a dwindling number of white supervisors and African employees. *Pour être heureux* appeared on 5 January 1935 and claimed that laziness and the possession of desires beyond their means and abilities were the principal sources of unhappiness among African workers<sup>(21)</sup>. As white labor in Katanga's factories and mines became increasingly redundant, these presumptions grew more shrill:

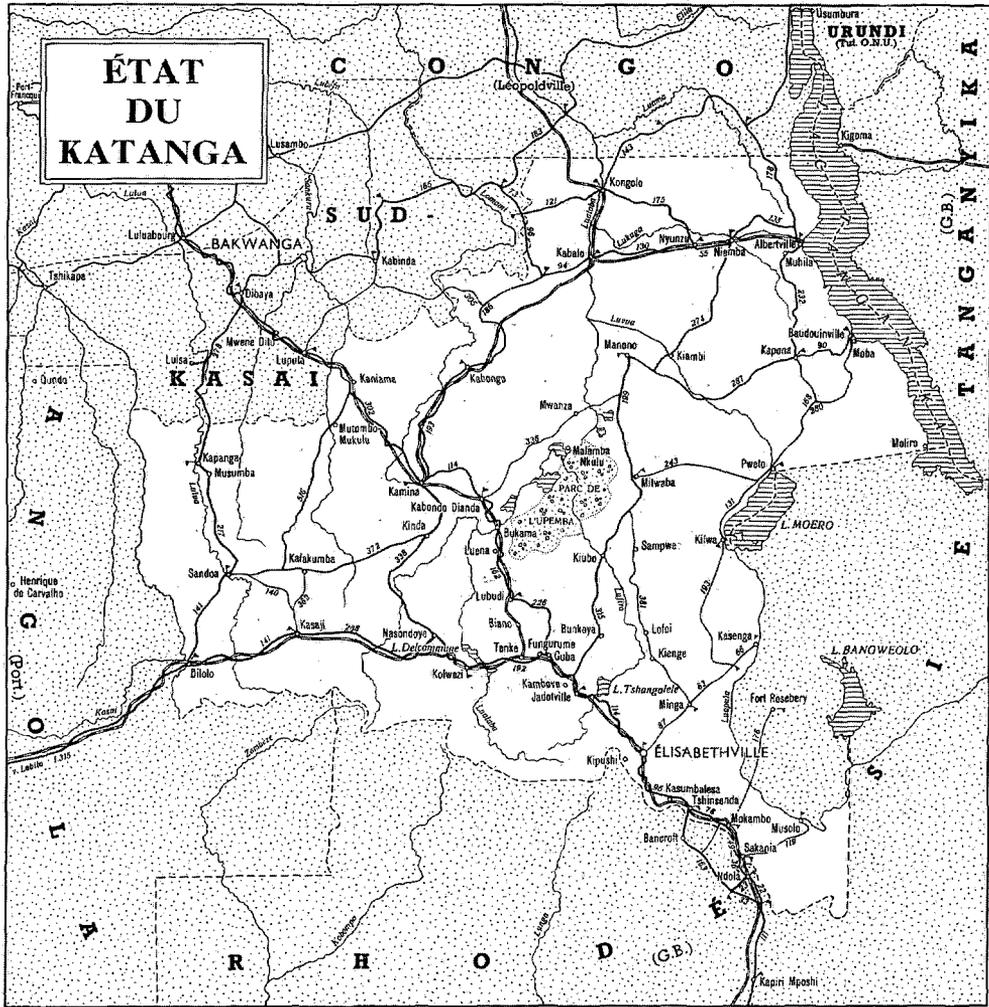
*"It is especially important for the native worker to improve and expand his general knowledge if he is going to be truly competent. He must be enthusiastic about his work and show that he can complete a given task. If you think you can do a white man's job, you must prove you are competent. Don't think that you are capable of doing so now - you are*

*flattering yourself"*<sup>(22)</sup>.

Much of the material that followed the first page was written in Swahili. It attempted to strike a rather different chord of the African workers' consciousness. *Habari Ndugu*, which appeared on 29 September 1934, extolled the musical talents of a brass band from Nyasaland (presently Malawi) that was playing in Elisabethville at the time. It urged the officers of the workers' lodges and ethnic brotherhoods to encourage their members to come out and see the band and participate in the ngoma or dance competitions<sup>(23)</sup>. On 26 January 1935 Ngonga published *Kutungu Barua*, a fastidious entry on the etiquette of letter writing. The article was much concerned to make a distinction between the mindless scrivener's work that one did in the front office of one of the work sites and penning a letter to one sweetheart or something of a more literary nature<sup>(24)</sup>. The author's choice of the verb 'kutunga' - to write with a creative purpose in mind - as opposed to the more generic 'kuandika' demonstrated that he possessed a certain reverence for the power of the written word. *Liwali Mukubwa*, which also appeared on 26 January, was a report on a ceremonial visit to Elisabethville by the newly appointed Governor-General, Pierre-Paul Ryckmans. It made much of Ryckmans and other officials in his entourage shaking hands with Kabongo Albert, a former carpenter and clerk at the central office of the Union minière and the appointed head of the town's African quarter<sup>(25)</sup>. The departure of the previous Governor-General, Auguste Tilkens, received only a brief mention:

*"Tilkens had been largely responsible for the creation of Katanga's provincial secret police and for the brutal suppression of African workers during the demonstrations and protests of 1931"*<sup>(26)</sup>.

Katanga Swahili - or 'Kingwana' as Europeans often called it - was more than a paired down pidgin dialect. Rather, it was a creolized version



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of East African Swahili. When African workers chose to convey periods when they were at rest or passing time with the Swahili verb 'kushinda', 'to conquer', rather than 'kupumzika' (to relax) or 'kubakia' (to 'while away'), for example, they were making a statement about the combative nature of the work routine. It was not necessarily the impoverished nature of their vocabulary that compelled this choice of words, but the nature of their experiences at work<sup>(27)</sup>.

African workers were not fooled by the way that their employers and the state chose to negotiate the language problem. They understood their preference to be no more than corporate power turned out in native drag. The industrial employers and the colonial state had in fact given rise to a colonial society that was centered as much on the industrial town as the peasant village. It was a society on the threshold of mass literacy, but in a language other than the native tongue of its ruling class. Like Caliban, African workers were obliged to seize upon the magical powers of language, but for their own purposes and behind the back of the Belgian Prospero<sup>(28)</sup>.

### A Worker's Tale

Yav André, an African domestic servant who, at age 45, decided to write about his experiences as a Belgian colonial subject, hardly qualified as naive. His *Vocabulaire de ville d' Elisabethville*, which he must have completed in early 1965, is one of the most authentic accounts of town life in Katanga during the first half of the twentieth century<sup>(29)</sup>. He was probably born in Elisabethville or taken there shortly after his birth in the early 1920s. Consequently, the allegories and rumors of Elisabethville's 'cité indigène' or African quarter provide Yav with a kind of intellectual shorthand and are deeply woven

into the narrative of the *Vocabulaire*.

Rumors, after all, have their place in history. They are not secrets. Rather, they are a means to give voice to alternative views of society that might otherwise go unheard. They may enter the public stream of information by alternative channels, but they are meant to be heard by everyone -including those who are not within earshot of the teller. Their veracity is often less important than their ability to make previously palatable explanations hard to swallow<sup>(30)</sup>. Operating in this fashion, Yav's *Vocabulaire* amounts to a kind of social map of Elisabethville and Katanga. For example, it tells us that Belgium's greatest sin was its predilection for usurping the Africans' geographical and cultural space in order to mold the realities of colonial rule. His account of the coming of the railway and the construction of the hydroelectric dam at Mwadingusha - where even the fish bore witness to the perverse new order of things - were quintessential expressions of this form of remembrance. Much like the map that Yav claimed Leopold II used to penetrate and conquer the Congo, the *Vocabulaire* revealed a previously hidden perception of high politics during the colonial epoch.

From 1886 to 1927 the geographical pivot of economic exploitation in the Congo moved from west to east and from north to south. The advent of the railroad, the opening of Katanga's mines, and the recruitment of tens of thousands of Africans from the Congo and the neighboring colonies as workers marked the culmination of the process. The colonial state, in combination with the Union minière, drew men from the Haut-Luapula Valley and Zambezi floodplain, and as far away as southern Kasai and Mozambique. Together, the mining company and the state began to transform the once semi-deserted pedicle of Katanga into Africa's second most important industrial region. Few

of these efforts were made with an eye toward deliberately expanding the human potential of the African workers<sup>(31)</sup>.

The early 1920s, the years of Yav's childhood, were times of feverish construction and many new projects were undertaken to provide Katanga's mining industry and towns with a better physical infrastructure<sup>(32)</sup>. By 1921 the provincial administration rebuilt the African quarter of Elisabethville. But unincorporated faubourgs and squatters' areas continued to grow in all of the industrial towns. Despite postwar reconstruction, the areas marked off for Europeans remained in the direct line of crossing for Africans going to and from work<sup>(33)</sup>. The physical landscape was easier to efface than the presence of African workers.

Colonial officials were especially concerned to establish precise boundaries for Elisabethville's African quarter because of their own paranoia about the safety of white women and the spread of epidemic diseases<sup>(34)</sup>. But since African domestic servants continued to live within the interstices of the European town well after the reconstruction of the African quarter, such aspirations proved virtually impossible. Less than a year after its completion, official observers began to speak of the new 'cité indigène' in disparaging terms:

*"A large number of natives consisting of the servant class and employees of various enterprises are bound to congregate in the vicinity of the larger European communities. Accommodations for them must be arranged. In the case of Elisabethville there are ten thousand such natives, and the quarter assigned to them has been allowed to impinge too closely upon the European quarter. Indeed, in some cases, it penetrates between the streets of the European quarter. A minimum of one kilometer should be established between the European and African town..."*<sup>(35)</sup>.

## The Struggle for Resources

Most colonial officials perceived the African population of the industrial towns, whether they were workers or not, as no more than 'stabilized vagabonds'. They believed the outer edges of the 'cité indigène' - the faubourgs and squatters' areas - to be the "refuge of prostitutes, libertines and roughly articulated ideas of rebellion against the colonial order"<sup>(36)</sup>. By 1931, however, the colonial administration in Katanga began to abandon a monolithic conception of the urban African population in favor of one that divided it into three social categories - 'main d'oeuvre indigène' or native wage labor, 'flottants' or semi-proletarianized casual laborers who moved back and forth between the towns and the rural areas, and 'déracinés', those Africans who had no moorings in either town or country. Standing commissions, a new series of municipal laws, and the creation of a provincial secret police undermined the relative autonomy that some African workers possessed by virtue of their freedom of movement<sup>(37)</sup>.

The new laws and ordinances also imposed an even more stringent, cruel and undemocratic dispensation on all Africans living in the towns. What postwar urban reconstruction achieved was less tangible than absolute residential segregation but potentially more important as far as industry's and the town's future were concerned. The new policies gave the colonial administration the means to determine the parameters of the struggle for resources in the towns - after the African masses had been drawn into the competition. But once African workers became attached to the towns, they required a uniform standard of living. Achieving this standard became a perpetual source of conflict among the ethnically diverse African population of Katanga's towns. The colonial administration and private employers ag-

gravated the struggle by superimposing a series of insidious but pervasive ethnographic caricatures on urban Africans - the Lamba were lazy and unreliable, the Bemba truculent and inclined to drunkenness, the Lunda secretive and malicious, and so on<sup>(38)</sup>. As a result, African industrial workers often envied the lot of African domestic servants who, by virtue of their proximity to Europeans, could acquire enough to eat as well as receive the cast-off garments of their employers. Food and clothing, or the lack thereof, were serious matters for those Africans who decided to remain in the towns<sup>(39)</sup>.

As African workers began to demand better living and working conditions and higher wages, the Union minière responded with piece rates and other aspects of scientific management in order to constrain their demands<sup>(40)</sup>. The state acted in complementary fashion. However much strategies like those that resulted in the publication of *Ngonga* mattered to some officials, coercion remained the staple of corporate and colonial policy: corporal punishment was seen as a practical solution to the African workers' restiveness, even though it was illegal after 1922; labor legislation talked of 'masters and servants' rather than of employers and workers; trade unions were illegal until the end of the Second World War; and the employers and the state inordinately feared the workers' lodges and friendly societies<sup>(41)</sup>. Work routines were therefore the product of skirmishes between rulers and ruled as well as capitalists and workers. This discontinuity reflected the hegemonic but uneven influence of Katanga's largest employer, the Union minière, over virtually every aspect of civil society and the colonial state<sup>(42)</sup>. Katanga's industrial revolution involved the creation of an industrial working class without the creation of an industrial society.

The Union minière's control over Katanga's provincial government was neither fortuitous

nor an 'historical accident'<sup>(43)</sup>. Its control over the local government was the logical culmination of its social and economic policies; yet the state remained, in some ways, autonomous<sup>(44)</sup>. Where the state adopted an authoritarian stance with Africans, it did so less out of reason than fear that it might be out of line with the mining company's wishes. The formation of Katanga's provincial secret police was the quintessential expression of this hit-and-miss policy<sup>(45)</sup>.

### Popular Protest

Much of the explosive character of popular protest in Katanga after the 1930s derived more from the repressive character of the state machinery than the growth of the working class 'per se'. Yet the struggles of Katanga's working class, particularly the mineworkers, galvanized and quickened working-class protest from other quarters of society - to the point that many colonial administrators in Katanga thought that they faced one solitary wave of popular protest between the outset of the Depression and the end of the Second World War. The response of the administration and the big employers to the 1941 strike wave at the Union minière was the most dramatic display of the influence that the provincial secret police had over policy makers in this epoch<sup>(46)</sup>.

Between 3 and 9 December 1941 a large segment of the African workers at the Union minière's factories and mines in Jadotville and Elisabethville went on strike. Those at the underground Prince Léopold Mine at Kipushi had gone out on strike in November, shortly after an aborted strike by the company's European workers. By the afternoon of 9 December, well over fifteen hundred workers had massed on the soccer field near the



*African industrial workers often envied the lot of African domestic servants who, by virtue of their proximity to Europeans, could acquire enough to eat as well as receive the cast-off garments of their employers (collection J. De Cock)*

Lubumbashi works in Elisabethville. By evening the workers had not dispersed. According to company sources, government forces were fast losing control<sup>(47)</sup>. Shaken by the news that the presence of army battalions at Jadotville had not discouraged striking workers at Luishia, Kambove and Likasi, Katanga's chief provincial commissioner-cum-governor, Amour Maron (1891-1948) (Yav's Alphonse Maron), sent in troops first at Lubumbashi and then appealed to the workers to disperse and return to work. According to Emile Toussaint, the associate director of the Union minière, Maron delivered his appeal to the strikers in 'kitchen' Swahili. Toussaint maintained that he tried to get Maron to deliver his appeal in French, but Maron insisted on speaking in a kind of Swahili, maintaining that "he knew the mentality of the blacks". After his appeal failed to make any impact on the mood of the strikers, Maron quickly withdrew, leaving the situation at an impasse<sup>(48)</sup>. Before Maron completed his speech, however, the troops, who had been called in initially, were placed into battle formation by the officers. Machine gun turrets were set up in each corner of the playing field<sup>(49)</sup>.

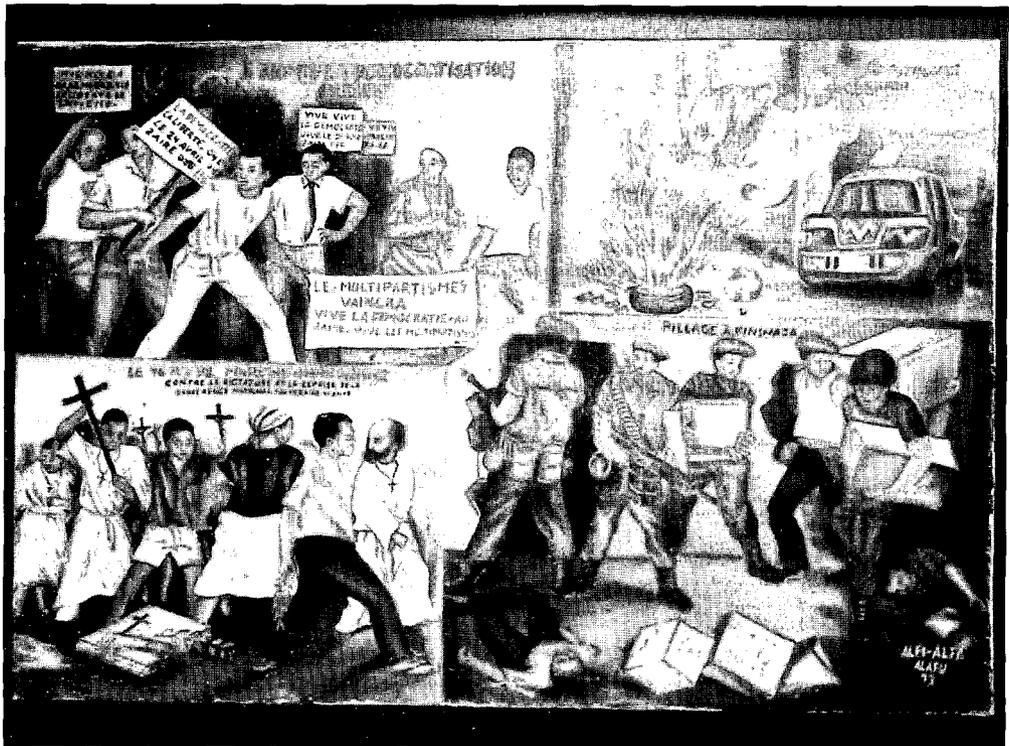
When police attempted to arrest the more recalcitrant workers, the soldiers plunged into the crowd. At that moment the soldiers manning the machine gun to the extreme left of the soccer field began to fire into the crowd. G. Montenez, a territorial administrator, described the situation on the evening of 9 December in this way:

*"The strikers held an all night vigil at the football field. More troops were called out under my command. They had strict orders not to shoot. The crowd began throwing stones. One soldier's ear was cut off by a rock. The soldiers grew angry (perhaps when the soldier lost his ear). They opened fire and 70 plus were killed"*<sup>(50)</sup>.

By the end of the strike wave the death toll for

African workers was over several hundred. While the white workers and their organization, Association des Agents de l'Union minière or Filiales (AGUFI), had remained aloof from the African strike movement, partly because of coercion and intimidation by both the government and the mining company, many of them came forth to testify about the atrocities they had witnessed during the sessions of the commissions of inquiry that convened after the strike. In several instances white trade union leaders paid dearly for their testimony. Georges Lievens, for instance, was imprisoned under a wartime preventive detention act, blacklisted for employment, and finally deported to Belgium on 31 May 1954<sup>(51)</sup>. According to Lievens, the soldiers' attack on the African strikers was not as prudent as Montenez's account suggested. He claimed that the soldiers had been called in to surround the workers' camp as early as the evening of 8 December and that they were charged with insuring that those workers who had joined the strike did not receive rations at 8:00 p.m. that evening. He also claimed that the African machine gunners had not fired into the crowd of strikers on impulse, as Montenez implied, but that they had been ordered to fire on the workers. Forty-eight African strikers were killed initially and another hundred and fifty were wounded, according to Lievens. More died on the following day. Many of those who died from their wounds were women. Shortly after the massacre the mining company built several wings of camp housing over the soccer field to blot any signs of what had happened<sup>(52)</sup>.

If the massacre took place as Lievens claimed, it would mean that the orders to fire on the workers came well in advance of Governor Maron's speech on the playing field - and that Maron himself had issued them. Paradoxically, Lievens's account of the strike's aftermath



*How did the series of historic conjunctures that led to independence also lead to the repression of popular aspirations and a monstrous dictatorship? (collection E. Matthijs)*

paralleled Yav's inasmuch as both of them attributed the massacre at Lubumbashi to Maron. However, in Yav's estimate, Maron's deeds and his ostensible fate - an untimely death in France six years later - were instances of moral entropy, where a ruler who acted without justice and compassion was consumed in a fire of his own making. Having failed to do what he promised, Maron became yet another symbol of colonialism's bad faith.

Differences in perception that arise after the fact do not affect the course of events, but they may determine the extent to which one identifies with their consequences. The significance of the African strike movement was not its success or failure, but that it reestablished the boundaries of what was possible in the relations between the workers and the company. Workers suddenly had greater room to maneuver. Although bound by racism and deference, which were reinforced by the colonial legal codes, African workers were, on the other hand, indispensable. And it was this indispensability, placed against a background of deteriorating working conditions and rising prices, that made the implications of the strike so threatening for the long term interests of the company and the colonial government.

Other groups joined the war of position against the colonial government. In 1944 a loose coalition of African soldiers, peasants and workers launched a rebellion in Katanga and the neighboring province of Kasai. A smaller, more localized rebellion arose in the Fizi region of Kivu as well. Much like the strike movement, the rebellions were brutally suppressed<sup>(53)</sup>. But despite its brutality, government repression of both the strike wave and the rebellions was not unilateral. Its unevenness enabled Africans to question Belgium's political authority on several levels simultaneously.

## The Eve of Independence

At the outset of the 1950s, as the ominous wave of popular protest appeared to subside, the colonial government and private industry sought to dam up working class unrest by once again increasing the urban standard of living, but at the expense of the rural population. This policy reversed the social thrust of immediate postwar initiatives<sup>(54)</sup>. However, officials who dealt directly with Katanga's African population were somewhat reluctant to tie higher African living standards to the success of counterinsurgency unconditionally. One official claimed:

*"Territorial administrators should stress that regular, effective work translates to a higher standard of living. Such amelioration should not occur too rapidly, however, for it would tend to break down respect for traditional authority. And since the stabilization of native labor has not yet been effected, many urban workers would exploit this confused situation in a manner which does not easily lend itself to suppression. I am convinced, by virtue of recent demographic studies, that we have reached a point where we must be able to identify precisely the native population. This is not just a scientific requirement, but a political necessity of the highest order"*<sup>(55)</sup>.

Later, as colonial rule came undone, Belgium counted on the ethnically nuanced aspirations of the African working class, particularly in Katanga, and the anti-communism of Great Britain and the United States to keep it in power<sup>(56)</sup>. But by 1959 - after the riots in Léopoldville, Stanleyville, and the new outbreak of labor unrest in Katanga - Belgian intransigence to the prospect of Congolese independence began to crumble. The indecisiveness of the regime during the urban riots, the visits of the king and Minister of Colonies immediately after the riots, and the accelerated

withdrawal of the government's agents from the rural areas all enhanced the colonial government's lack of legitimacy. Once the density of the on-the-ground colonial administration began to thin out, local leaders and parties demanding an immediate end to Belgian rule surfaced in every province of the Congo<sup>(57)</sup>.

### Conclusion

Yav completed the *Vocabulaire* in 1965, some five years after formal independence and in the midst of a civil war. He wrote it from the vantage point of a domestic servant or 'boy'. Consequently, he was concerned to write an imminently useable history of Elisabethville - a primer or handbook - for an urban African posterity in search of employment in uncertain political times. His selection of the crucial happenings of the colonial era was governed by this concern. This is perhaps why independence seemed so "rotten" to him: under the circumstances, the market for domestic servants contracted sharply.

Yav was clearly writing in a hurry. Less than two years earlier, on 29 December 1963, Moïse Tshombe's secessionist government in Katanga had fallen. A few months later civil war broke out over most of the Congo. By late May 1964 thousands of inhabitants of the mining town of Manono, just three hundred miles north of Yav's Elisabethville, eagerly awaited the arrival of insurgent forces<sup>(58)</sup>. By 26 June 1964 the Congolese government was pleading with Tshombe to return from exile in Spain in order to become prime minister of the country from which he had seceded two years before<sup>(59)</sup>. Finally, in 1965, mercenary soldiers, who had fled Katanga before the fall of the secessionist government and the arrival of the United Nations troops, returned to Elisabethville, their

pockets bulging with Congolese and foreign banknotes. Events moved swiftly and, more often than not, at the barrel of a gun.

Despite the speed with which his world was changing, Yav thought it prudent to reflect on what had not changed:

*"And so we got that rotten independence of ours. Many people no longer loved each other. And they began to look at the European stores. But we, the boys, did not have that spirit. We lived in our commune Elizabeth and there were many whites [with us]. At that time our masters and their wives fled and returned home. But there were also many who did not run away. Many went and many stayed. And we, the boys, watched over their belongings without losing anything. There in all the communes [of the African part of town] people were killing each other. Not we, the boys. And we made our politics mouth to mouth. There was conflict among us [too]. We, the boys wanted to get [an accord] from the governor and those two Bwanas of the commune Elizabeth that our commune Elizabeth might be reserved for us. Because ever since we had our and got to our independence you, our leaders, did not take care of us, the boys<sup>(60)</sup>.*

The *Vocabulaire* poses one of the most persistent questions of the Congo's modern history: how did the series of historic conjunctures that led to independence also lead to the repression of popular aspirations and a monstrous dictatorship that transformed survival and passivity into virtues? Unassuming but intelligent working people like Yav Andre expected a reasonable answer. If he is alive now, he is still waiting.

- (1) De Hemptinne's original read in the following manner: "Avec mille variantes que l'on devine, le thème des revendications rencontre dans la brousse le mécontentement des populations agricoles. Celles-ci obéissent à la raison du plus fort, mais avec amertume. Partout l'esprit d'antipathie et de défiance gagne du terrain."  
*"L'indigène se détache de nous; il échappe de plus en plus à notre influence et à notre prestige. La physionomie du Congo change d'expression. La Belgique est en train de perdre son auréole africain."*; see National Archives of the United States (NAUS) 855A.00.753, no. 654, American Consulate, Léopoldville, Belgian Congo, January 26, 1944, *Criticism by Apostolic Vicar of Belgian Government's War Policy of All-Out Production for the Congo*.
- (2) Thomas KANZA, *Conflict in the Congo*, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1972, p. 325.
- (3) see Noremitsu ONISHI, Tintin at 70: Colonialism's Comic-Book Puppet? In: *New York Times*, 08.01.1999, p. 4.
- (4) This term became widespread after the opening of the World's Fair in Belgium in April 1958 and Congolese popular protest between October 1958 and January 1959. On 4 January 1959, after riots in Léopoldville and Stanleyville, the colonial administration permitted Congolese to form political parties: see Cléophas KAMITATU, *La Grande Mystification du Congo-Kinshasa*, Paris: François Maspero, 1971, pp. 24-43; see also Thomas KANZA, *Conflict [...]*, pp. 39-41.
- (5) For two politically opposed but thorough explorations of the choices before the Belgian colonial government and the Congolese people see: B. VERHAEGEN's two volumes of analysis and documents, *Rébellions au Congo*, tomes 1 and 2, Bruxelles: Centre de Recherche et d'Information Socio-Politiques (CRISP), 1971; see also J. STENGERS, *Combien le Congo a-t-il coûté à la Belgique?* Bruxelles: Académie Royale des Sciences Coloniales, 1957.
- (6) See B. JEWSIEWICKI, Monstres, violence et histoire: une écriture iconique du savoir populaire sur les rapports de pouvoir au Zaïre actuel. In: L. TURGEON (ed.), *Les productions symboliques du pouvoir XVIe-XXe siècle*, Québec: Septentrion, 1990, pp. 194-211; see also M. FOUCAULT, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, London: Tavistock, 1972.
- (7) See J. BARZUN, H.F. GRAFF, *The Modern Researcher*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992, pp. 134-135.
- (8) For a novel conceptual approach to this problem see: R. BASTIDE, *Le rêve, la transe et la folie*, Paris: Flammarion, 1972, pp. 23-30; see also A. O. HIRSCHMAN, *Rival Views of Market Society*, New York: The Viking Press, 1986, pp. 77-106.
- (9) R. BASTIDE, *Le rêve [...]*, pp. 29-30; see also J. SCOTT, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, pp. 90-107.
- (10) J.G.A. POCOCK, *Politics, Language and Time*, New York: Atheneum Press, 1973, pp. 17-19; see also J. SCOTT, *Weapons of the Weak*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985, pp. 41-55.
- (11) See E. WOLF, *Envisioning Power*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998, pp. 42-56; see also J. SCOTT, *Domination [...]*, p. 107.
- (12) L. CARROLL, *The Complete Works*, New York: Vintage Press, 1976, p. 214; see also R. STARN, Historians and 'Crisis'. In: *Past and Present*, (August 1971)52, pp. 3-22.
- (13) See J. FABIAN, *Language and Colonial Power*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1986, pp. 92-112.
- (14) J. FABIAN, *Language [...]*, p. 11 and pp. 92-112.
- (15) See B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976, p. 74.
- (16) In a brilliant six pages Robert Poupard discusses this problem under the heading 'L'Impulsion Brousse-Ville', see R. POUPART, *Facteurs de productivité de la main-d'oeuvre autochtone à Elisabethville*, Bruxelles: Editions de l'Institut de Sociologie Solvay, 1961, pp. 17-23; see also *Rapport de la commission pour l'étude du problème de la main-d'oeuvre au Congo Belge*. In: *Revue Congo*, (juin 1925), pp. 1-12 (annexe); B. JEWSIEWICKI, La contestation sociale et la naissance du prolétariat au Zaïre au cours de la première moitié du XXème siècle. In: *Revue canadienne des études africaines*, X(1976), pp. 70-96; FABIAN, *Language and Colonial Power*, pp. 102-105 and p. 152.
- (17) See J. HIGGINSON, *A Working Class in the Making: Belgian Colonial Labor Policy, Private Enterprise, and the African Mineworker*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989, pp. 108-110.
- (18) See MUSAS TSHIBANGU KABET, *L'Impact socio-économique de la grande crise économique mondiale des années 1929-1935 sur l'ancien Haut-Katanga industriel*, UNAZA, Lubumbashi, thèse de doctorat, 1986; see also Archives Gécamines (AG), D6, no. 43, E'ville, 27.08.1935, *Lettre de Gustave Dombe Mathieu*; Gustave Mathieu DOMBE, Mwana-muke Hawezi Kunyamala. In: *Ngonga*, 03.11.1934, pp. 3-4.
- (19) See BAKAJIKA BANJIKILA, *Capitalisme, rapport salarial et régulation de la main-d'oeuvre: la classe ouvrière noire dans les camps de L'Union minière du Haut-Katanga, 1925-1967*, Université Laval, Québec, thèse de doctorat, 1993, pp. 146-148; see also J. HIGGINSON, *A Working Class in the Making*, pp. 86-103.

- (20) See for example an excerpt from a letter from A. J. BEIA, a former factory operative at the Union minière, which appeared in *Ngonga* on 3 November 1934: "Monsieur le Directeur: Many whites are astonished to hear our demands for better housing and better treatment... Permit me to draw attention to the fact that a small dwelling might have served our needs in the past... But now, with new ways of doing things introduced into our country, we can no longer live as we did in the past." See also P. VAN DE WEYER, J. QUETS, *Vocabulaire français-kiswahili (et bemba) et éléments de conversation*, Bruxelles: Imprimerie Industrielle et Concière, 1929.
- (21) Anon. (editorial), L'Union fait la force. In: *Ngonga*, 01.12.1934; see also Anon. (editorial), Pour être heureux. In: *Ngonga*, 05.01.1935, p. 1.
- (22) Anon. (editorial), Les emplois pour indigènes dans l'Administration. In: *Ngonga*, 13.10.1934, p. 1.
- (23) See J. KATUMBAIE, Habari Ndugu. In: *Ngonga*, 29.09.1934, p. 4.
- (24) Anon., Kutunga Barua. In: *Ngonga*, 26.01.1935, p. 2.
- (25) Anon., Liwali Mukubwa (Ryckmans). In: *Ngonga*, 26.01.1935, p. 2.
- (26) AG, C8, SM/MOI 1931, *Dossier sur la nécessité d'établir auprès des centres industriels une administration directe et compétente (21 août 1931: Pasmans)*; see also Martin de Rycke Papers: Congo Collection (MRPCC), Michigan State University, Secte 'Kitawala' (handwritten notes), *Tomo Nyirenda alias Mwana Lesa c.-à-d 'Fils de Dieu'*; see also B. FETTER, *The Creation of Elisabethville*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976, pp. 139-140.
- (27) see J. FABIAN, *Language [...]*, pp. 102-105 and p. 132; see also J. HIGGINSON, *A Working Class [...]*, pp. 138-139 and pp. 176-177.
- (28) For a sustained analysis of this problem, see K. FIELDS, *Revival and Rebellion in Central Africa*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986; see also S. CROSS, *The Watchtower Movement in South Central Africa, 1908-1945*, D. Phil. Oxford University, October 1973, pp. 8-10; E. BUSTIN, Government Policy Toward Cult Movements in Katanga. In: M. KARP (ed.), *African Dimensions*, Boston: Boston University Press, 1973, pp. 115-119; MRPCC, Lansing, Michigan, Michigan State University, Secte 'Kitawala' Province d'Elisabethville, District du Taganika, Secret-Sûreté Publique, Rapport no. 2, 8 mai 1937, *Rapport sur les agissements du nommé Kulu Mupenda alias Kandeke Sandwe, propageant les doctrines du 'Kitawala' en chefferie Benze du Territoire d'Albertville District du Tanganika*.
- (29) In late 1966 André Yav gave a copy of his manuscript to the historian Bruce Fetter. Months later, during the occupation of Katanga (presently Shaba) by columns of mercenary soldiers and those of the Congolese national army, Yav disappeared: see B. FETTER, *Yav André: His Sources and His Viewpoint*; see also A. YAV, *Vocabulaire de ville d'Elisabethville*, Elisabethville, B.P. 3455: *Les Agents Anciens Domestiques aux communes d'Elisabethville, le 5 septembre 1965*, pp. 1-33.
- (30) See A. O. HIRSCHMAN, *Rival Views of Market Society*, pp. 77-94.
- (31) See J.-L. VELLUT, Mining in the Belgian Congo. In: D. BIRMINGHAM and P. M. MARTIN (eds.), *History of Central Africa*, New York: Longman, 1983, pp. 126-162; see also L. DE SAINT MOULIN, L'Organisation de l'espace en Afrique Centrale à la fin du XIXe siècle. In: *Cultures et développement*, Vol. XIV (1982)2-3, pp. 259-296; J. HIGGINSON, *A Working Class [...]*, pp. 7-8.
- (32) Anon., L'Impôt indigène et le développement économique. In: *Notre Colonie*, 15.11.1919.
- (33) See Comité régional du Katanga (Comptes-rendus des séances), Annexe 8, 1923, *La Situation politique générale*, 45; Comité régional du Katanga (Comptes-rendus des séances), 1926, *Indisciplines des travailleurs noirs: sont-elles réelles? Quelles en sont les causes principales? Quels seraient les remèdes?*
- (34) Comité régional du Katanga (Comptes-rendus des séances), 1927, "Personne ne contestera l'immoralité de l'exploitation par des femmes blanches de débits de bière aux indigènes", pp. 85-96; see also Archives africaines (AA): Répertoire de l'ancien Ministère des Colonies, Brussels, Belgium, MOI no. 51 (3554), A/13, Polidori, *Rapport sur la situation sanitaire et hygiénique des travailleurs de l'Union Minière à l'Etoile du Congo*, 28 novembre 1916.
- (35) Anon., Déracinés autour des Grands Centres. In: *Congo. Revue générale de la colonie*, annexe II, juin 1924, p. 5.
- (36) See AG, C8, Réunion MOI, *Situation des effectifs au premier mars 1932*, 9 mars 1932; see also AA, Brussels, Belgium, MOI no. 133(3598), 4e direction, 1e section, *Recrutement de main d'oeuvre pour le Haut-Katanga*, 4 février 1926; F. GREVISSE, *Quelques aspects de l'organisation des indigènes déracinés résidant en territoire de Jadotville*, Anvers: Editions Institut colonial et maritime, 1936, p. 11.
- (37) AG, C8 MOI no.262. *A monsieur le commissaire de police Kipushi*, 21 août 1931, Mine Prince Léopold; see also J. SOHIER, *La Mémoire d'un policier belgo-congolais*, Bruxelles: Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1974.
- (38) AG, C8, annexe D12, no. 84, *Demande d'enseignement*, 12 décembre 1927, Elisabethville; see also AG, C8, MOI D13, *Discipline des travailleurs noirs*, 1928.
- (39) Numerous cases that came before the police tribunal of Elisabethville during the 1920s illus-

- trated the magnitude of the struggle for resources. Those of Jali Johan, a domestic servant of Gustave Van Rampelbergh, and Kalamba Joseph, an employee of the Chemin de Fer du Katanga (CFK), are of particular interest. Both Jali and Kalamba regularly stole large quantities of bread and butter from their employers. Both were also part of a fairly large network of smugglers. The smugglers stock-piled food in the smaller mining towns, after initially filching it from Elisabethville. Eventually, with the help of the smugglers, most of the food would find its way back to Elisabethville: see *Journal administratif du Katanga*, 1925, *Assignment à prévenu (Jali Johan)*, 29 septembre 1925, *Assignment à prévenu (Kalamba Joseph)*, 6 octobre 1925.
- (40) AA, MOI no. 4 (3553) Bourse du Travail, *Correspondances de Malfeyt*, 29 septembre 1913, Bruxelles; AA, MOI no. 59 (3558), *Examen psychologique*, 17 février 1922.
- (41) AG, C8 MOI no. 121, *Organisation: Les Belges*, 20 août 1928; AG, *Discipline des travailleurs noirs*; see also F. DELLICOUR, *Les premières années de la cour d'appel d'Elisabethville, 1910-1920*, Bruxelles: Editions Aurore, 1938; B. FETTER, African Associations in Elisabethville, 1910-1935: Their Origins and Development. In: *Etudes d'histoire africaine* 2(1976), pp. 205-220.
- (42) MUSAS KABET TSHIBANGU, La situation sociale dans le ressort administratif de Likasi (ex-territoire de Jadotville) pendant la guerre. In: *Etudes d'histoire africaine*, 6(1974), pp. 275-331; see also MALIRA KABUYA-NAMULEMBA, Regard sur la situation sociale de la citoyenne lushoïse d'avant 1950. In: *Likundoli*, 2(1974)1, pp. 63-71.
- (43) See R. LEMOINE, *La Concentration des Entreprises dans la mise en valeur du Congo*, 6(1934)29, pp. 433-449; see also T. HODGKIN, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*, New York: New York University Press, 1957, pp. 48-56.
- (44) See C. YOUNG, *Politics in the Congo*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 234; see also B. JEWSIEWICKI, Zaire Enters the World System. Its Colonial Incorporation as the Belgian Congo, 1885-1960. In: G. GRAN (ed.), *Zaire: The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*, New York: Praeger, 1979, pp. 29-54.
- (45) See J. SOHIER, Présentation de 'La mémoire d'un policier belgo-congolais'. In: *Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer*, (1973)3, pp. 482-487; see also J.-L. VELLUT, Le Katanga industriel en 1944: Malaises et anxiétés dans la société coloniale. In: J. STENGERS and J.-J. SYMONS (eds.), *Le Congo belge durant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, recueil d'études*, Bruxelles: Académie Royale des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1983, pp. 495-524; J. HIGGINSON, Steam Without a Piston Box: Strikes and Popular Unrest in Katanga, 1943-1945. In: *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 21(1988)1, pp. 97-117.
- (46) See Anon. (editorial), La Grève de Lubumbashi. In: *L'Essor du Congo*, 13(10.12.1941)419, p. 1; see also AG, A1, *Rapport annuel, 1942*; AG, A1, Rolus [Emile], *Rapport sur la grève des travailleurs (1942)*; René Lemarchand Collection, Hoover Institution (LCHI), Palo Alto, California, Emile Toussaint, untitled (handwritten notes), 2 janvier 1945.
- (47) LCHI, Toussaint; LCHI, G. Montenez, handwritten notes (untitled) 28 septembre 1965; see also AG, B6, MOI no. 37, Rolus, *Rapport sur les travailleurs indigènes*, 11 décembre 1941.
- (48) See LCHI, G. Montenez, handwritten notes (untitled); LCHI, Georges Lievens, *Lettre ouverte à Monsieur Rolus*.
- (49) LCHI, Toussaint, handwritten notes (untitled); LCHI, G. Montenez, handwritten notes (untitled); LCHI, Georges Lievens, *Lettre ouverte à Monsieur Rolus*.
- (50) LCHI, G. Montenez, handwritten notes (untitled).
- (51) LCHI, Georges Lievens, *Lettre ouverte à Monsieur Rolus*.
- (52) LCHI, Georges Lievens, *Lettre ouverte [...]*.
- (53) LCHI, Administration de la Sûreté du Congo Belge, *Rapport du Secrétariat sur l'Activité de l'Association Lulua Frères, exercice du 1 janvier au 31 décembre 1946*, Elisabethville; see also J. HIGGINSON, *Steam Without [...]*, pp. 110-117.
- (54) See J.-P. PEEMANS, Capital Accumulation in the Congo under Colonialism: The Role of the State. In: P. DUGNAN, L. GANN (eds.), *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960*, volume 4, London: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 199-205.
- (55) Conseil de Province du Katanga (Comptes-rendus des séances), *Recensement et Identification des indigènes* and Annexe I: *Proposé par les Services des A.I.M.O. et de Sûreté du Gouvernement Général*, 1951.
- (56) See Moïse TSHOMBE, *My Fifteen Months in Government*, Plano, Texas: University of Plano, 1967; see also B. VERHAEGEN, *Rébellions au Congo*, vol. 1, pp. 415-420; J. LANTIER, *Le temps des mercenaires: faut-il les condamner?* Paris: Bibliothèque Marabout, 1969, pp. 195-225.
- (57) See B. VERHAEGEN, *Rébellions [...]*, tome 1, pp. 14-30; C. YOUNG, *Politics in the Congo*, pp. 240-247.
- (58) B. VERHAEGEN, *Rébellions [...]*, tome 1, pp. 415-420.
- (59) M. TSHOMBE, *My Fifteen Months [...]*, p. 87; see also J. LANTIER, *Le temps des mercenaires [...]*, p. 227.
- (60) A. YAV, *Vocabulaire De Ville d'Elisabethville*, p. 33.