

CHAPTER III  
 THE CONGO  
 IN OUR TIME

thousand dollars, Tippo-Tip agreed to accompany the explorer for three months. At the beginning of November, the two men left Nyangwe together and went down the river in a collapsible boat that Stanley's men had carried on their backs all the way from the Indian Ocean.

But a few weeks later, at the end of December, Tippo-Tip, discouraged by the dangers of the undertaking and the illnesses that were making frightful ravages among his men, left his companion after having accompanied him as far as Kindu. From that time on, Stanley was alone with his escort in a hostile environment. He plunged forward into the unknown... When he reached Boma in August of the following year, he had lost all his European companions and two-thirds of his effectives. But this exhausted man brought back, with the discovery of the course of the Congo River, the key to a problem first posed in 1482.

Henceforth, in the east and in the west, routes leading from both oceans to the heart of Africa were open. Africa was entering the modern world.

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1. How the Congo Free State was Created.

A.

Creation of the International African Association.

Since the sensational meeting of Livingstone and Stanley in Tanganyika and the publication of the reports of the explorers who had just penetrated the very heart of equatorial Africa, Europe had had its eyes turned in that direction. A strong current of genuine interest was in the making. The King of the Belgians, Leopold II, felt immediately that he might thus be



As early as 1877, the central committee of the Association had taken as its emblem the flag with one gold star which was later to become that of the Congo Free State.

## B.

### Creation of the Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo and of the International Association of the Congo.

But while the Belgian committee of the International African Association was getting a foothold in Africa, the King's plans were upset by a decisive event: Stanley's successful expedition down the Congo River.

Leopold II immediately grasped the immense significance of this discovery: when Stanley disembarked at Marseilles in January 1878 on his way home, he found two representatives of the King waiting for him. However, the explorer at first declined the offers that were made to him. It was only later, after he had encountered nothing but indifference on the part of the British and the American government, that he turned to Leopold II.

From that time on, the Congo entered contemporary history: expeditions studied the country; centers of civilization were built; the first boats were launched and the first roads constructed. Out of the collaboration of Stanley and Leopold II the Congo of today arose.

The first interview between the King and the explorer took place in June 1878. The foundations were laid for future action,

given an opportunity to realize at last a dream which had been that of Leopold I and which he himself had cherished since his youth: to assure Belgium's prosperity by giving her the chance to a broad commercial expansion.

However, it was necessary to act with skill, speed, and prudence. The King was destined to make use of all his tact and ability in dealing with this matter.

Leopold II took the initiative of organizing, in his private and personal capacity, an international geographic conference. It was to meet under his chairmanship at Brussels on September 12, 1876. Germany, Austria-Hungary, France, Great Britain, Italy, Russia and Belgium were represented. The Sovereign, in opening the meeting, emphasized the necessity of freeing Africa from slavery and of introducing civilization.

The discussions led to the creation of a new organization: the « International African Association ». Its aims were to abolish the slave trade and open up Africa to international commerce.

In order to realize its aims, the Association proposed to organize exploratory expeditions and to establish hospitals and scientific posts. In order to do this, it reorganized itself as a central committee presided over by the King, and various national committees.

The Belgian committee financed by Leopold II and by national subscriptions was the most active. Between 1877 and 1884, it organized five expeditions at the head of which were E. F. Cambier, E. Popelin, G. Kamaekers, E. P. J. Storms, J. Becker and A. E. Durette; it was then that the posts of Karema and M'Pala were founded on Lake Tanganika.



The realization of this plan of creating a sovereign state was to be accelerated by a new organization that superseded the Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo. As a matter of fact, the latter had come to an end for financial reasons, and Leopold II had replaced it by another organization, more pliable, over which he had much greater power: the « International Association of the Congo ». It was in the name of this new organization that the gradual occupation of the country proceeded. This Association was soon to engender the Congo Free State.

### C.

## Creation of the Congo Free State.

Under the direction of Leopold II, the International Association of men had finally succeeded in overcoming the obstacle that the rapids of the river had opposed for centuries to any penetration starting from the Atlantic. Within a few years, expeditions became more and more frequent and branched out into the interior of the country. Commercial activities were started and communications reached even the most remote regions. As early as 1885, the Association had to its credit, in addition to the launching of a flotilla of five steamers, the establishment of a network of forty posts which covered nearly half of the present-day Congo and, especially, a total of more than five hundred treaties of suzerainty concluded with the native chiefs.

Meanwhile, the great nations were carefully observing this work accomplished under the stimulus of the sovereign of a small neutral country. At the same time, they kept watching each other because they coveted the same part of Africa. The entrance of the Belgian King on the international scene might offer them a solution that would prevent the destruction of the precarious

and towards the end of the year, in November, a « Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo » was set up with the collaboration of businessmen.

The aims of this committee were of a commercial nature: to find ways of establishing easy communication between the Lower and the Upper Congo, the two sections of the river being separated by a series of impassable falls and rapids which presented an obstacle to profitable trading. Some way of avoiding this obstacle would have to be found. Afterwards a flotilla would have to be launched on the river and posts established that would serve as relay stations.

The first expedition organized by the Committee set out in 1879. It was commanded by Stanley who was accompanied by a staff of Belgian officers. Among these were Cambier and Hanssens, who later relieved Stanley as the chief of operations. Results came quickly. Within three years, thirty posts were established, among them Leopoldville; a road was laid out and on it men carried on their backs — in detached parts — the first steamers to be launched, at Leopoldville, on the immense navigable stretch of the river. At the same time the exploration of the country was organized and treaties with the native chiefs were concluded. They were both political and commercial in character and they granted the newcomers the right to occupy the land. In fact, later on when internationally recognized, these treaties were destined to legalize the rights acquired to this African territory.

However, in addition to the avowed aims of the Committee, Leopold II was already thinking of the creation of a state in the Congo basin. This design appears clearly in the secret instructions given to Stanley in 1879. These instructions concern the treaties to be concluded with the native chiefs and they reveal the monarch's plan of acquiring gradually a confederation of which he would be the founder and sovereign.



the commerce of all countries, thus excluding any kind of monopoly or preferential treatment in regard to either ships or merchandise.

Thus Leopold II secured recognition of the existence of the African state he had wanted to create.

Belgium soon ratified the new position of her King. Indeed, it was in April 1885 that the Belgian parliament authorized Leopold II to be the head of the new state founded in Africa, while at the same time stipulating that the union between Belgium and that state should rest exclusively with the person of the Sovereign.

On May 29, a decree changed the name of the « International Association of the Congo » to « Congo Free state ».

On July 19, 1885, a solemn proclamation of the accession to the throne of Leopold II as sovereign of the Congo Free State was made at Banana, in the Congo, and on August 1 official notification of this proclamation was given to all the powers.

equilibrium of forces that had been brought about in Europe toward the end of the preceding century.

Leopold II knew how to profit by this situation. With great skill, he was able simultaneously to turn to his advantage the rivalries that divided the great powers, and also to call the world's attention to the importance of the work accomplished in Africa under his guidance. After checkmating the Portuguese claims to the mouth of the Congo River, he secured recognition of the validity of the treaties concluded with the native chiefs, and he signed, in the name of the Association, international agreements with France and Germany. Finally, on April 11, 1884, for the first time, a great power, the United States, officially recognized the International Association of the Congo as a sovereign state. From that time on, events moved rapidly.

Germany, in view of the international repercussions that European penetration of Central Africa might have, took the initiative of assembling representatives of fourteen countries at Berlin. The Berlin Conference lasted more than four months, from November 15, 1884 to February 26, 1885. On February 23, the matter was settled: the status of a sovereign state was unanimously accorded by all these nations to the International Association of the Congo, and it was in that capacity that the latter, three days later, signed the « General Act of Berlin » with the other countries. This was an act concerning the conventional basin of the Congo, which was occupied not only by the Association but also by the French, the Portuguese, the English, the Germans, and the Italians. The new state in its entirety was contained within the area of this conventional basin.

The General Act of Berlin confirmed the abolition of the slave trade and the obligation to improve the moral and material living condition of the natives; furthermore, it broke new ground in imposing an economic regime based on a certain amount of free internationalization and a strict adherence to the principle of free trade. The conventional basin of the Congo was to be open to

regime that had been imposed on the new state. Indeed, customs duties had been forbidden, and four years passed before such Draconian measures were somewhat relaxed. In 1889 a new international conference met at Brussels with the aim of coordinating the measures taken by the powers against the slave trade. Leopold II took advantage of this opportunity to secure a relaxation of the rules that weighed so heavily on the economy of the young state and he was authorized to impose customs duties up to a limit of 10% ad valorem.

Without delay Leopold II appealed to his people, to the army, the financiers, and the civil servants, asking them to help him carry through his work in the Congo. The response evoked by this appeal was mixed. Among the general public there was apathy, skepticism, and even hostility. However, the King always found an elite that gave him the help he needed. From the start, the army responded to his appeal; numerous commissioned and non-commissioned Belgian officers — joined by many foreigners, among them Italians and Swedes — went out to Africa to bring about an occupation and pacification that called for heroism. Among these pioneers, Coquilhat, Hanssens, Vandevelde, Cambier, Van Gele distinguished themselves. While the Congolese territory was divided from this time on into districts commanded by commissioners, an administrative general staff of which Van Betvelde, Droogmans, Cuvelier, Liebrecht were notable members ruled it from Brussels. Meanwhile the King was arousing interest in his new project among businessmen whose support later enabled him to persevere despite great financial difficulties. Thys, Empain and Lambert gave him a great deal of help during these difficult years.

In 1890 a gigantic task was undertaken : the construction of a railroad line which was to link Matadi and Leopoldville and thus, by putting an end to portage on the caravan trail, connect the navigable sections of the Lower Congo and the Upper Congo. Eight years later the first Congolese railroad conveyed the products of the equatorial forests to seagoing vessels anchored in the river before Matadi.

## 2. The Congo Free State.

### A.

#### Organization.

The Conference of Berlin made Leopold II the ruler of a territory of nearly a million square miles. His sovereignty over that vast region was absolute; he directed the country's politics, diplomacy, and economy according to his own discretion.

But the Act of Berlin had made the validity of this sovereignty contingent on the actual occupation of the country. It was necessary to set about this task as quickly as possible. An immense domain had to be occupied, its administration and army had to be organized, the region had to be developed and the slave trade brought to an end. And all this had to be done with resources that were very uncertain because of the economic







rilles. The establishment of a post at Dilolo the following year assured the protection of the region against incursions from Angola.

## C.

### Development.

While the armed forces were driving out the slave traders and pacifying the country, a colossal task of organization and development was under way.

Expeditions continued to carry on the exploration and occupation of the country. Four of them, between 1890 and 1893, brought about the occupation of Katanga, a region coveted by Cecil Rhodes. It was then that the Belgian geologist Jules Cornet (1865-1929) discovered the immense mineral wealth of that region. A special organization — the Special Committee for Katanga — was created to plan the exploitation of the region by the Congo Free State and the Katanga Company in partnership. It had received liberal commissions in exchange for services rendered in the course of the occupation of the territory.

At the same time, commercial companies were founded, crop culture was introduced, stock raising was undertaken, and the exportation of natural resources was organized. In 1905 and 1906, the first gold and copper mines began to be exploited. Finally, the railroad of the Lower Congo was supplemented by railroads that covered the east of the country with a network that became more and more complex. This economic development was accompanied by the organization of an administrative and judicial system that was gradually extended and strengthened. Furthermore, a start was made on civil legislation.

However, such an effort involved immense expenses. The Congo Free State tried to cope with the situation by means of taxes and customs duties; the King himself made a contribution from his private fortune. But these resources turned out to be insufficient. Other means had to be found without delay. The young state was spurred on by immense needs; in order to satisfy them it was led to take upon itself the task of exploiting the territory. For this purpose it reserved for itself, from 1891 on, all the vacant land, and subjected the natives to a tax in kind. In this connection a series of decrees organized the gathering of ivory and rubber on land belonging to the state. This system was combined with a tax in kind that was collected not only by officials but also by the employees of farming companies commissioned to gather the natural resources on behalf of the state. Such a system gave rise to serious local abuses that were encouraged by the granting of premiums to the agents in charge.

Against these abuses a storm of protests quickly arose, not only in Belgium but also abroad. Vehement campaigns were launched, sometimes unjust or dictated by self-interest. The climax was reached when a White Book published by the British government brought together all the accusations that had been made against the Congo Free State.

Confronted by this wave of public opinion, Leopold II did not hesitate to set up a commission of inquiry. Created on July 23, 1904, the latter consisted of three magistrates of different nationalities. This commission, to which royal instructions had given unlimited authority, spent five months in the Congo. The report it submitted on returning to Belgium put things in their true light: no doubt individual abuses had been committed, no doubt reforms were needed in certain matters; but on the whole, the activities of the Congo Free State could be judged favorably. This report expressly declares: « Although our mission has been confined to investigating the bad treatment or the abuses that the natives have complained of and ascertaining what evil has been done, we believe that we have the right to point out in passing the good that has impressed us. When one travels in the Congo and compares the older Congo, as we know it from the



writings and descriptions of the explorers, with the Congo of today, the impression received is one of admiration and wonder. The Free State, by the prodigies it has accomplished in twenty years, has given the world the opportunity — in fact, we ought to say the right — to expect a great deal of it. »

The recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry were followed up by Leopold II. Numerous reforms were made in the system; they were the subject of a series of new decrees signed in 1906.

### 3.

## The Belgian Congo.

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### A. How the Congo Free State became a Belgian Colony.

The Congo Free State lasted twenty-three years. In 1908, it became a Belgian colonial possession.

How can this transformation of an independent country into a colony be explained? The change did not come unexpectedly; neither was it, as people might believe, purely a result of the campaigns against Leopold's rule. As a matter of fact, the annexation of the Congo by Belgium came as a result of a long period of preparation. It was brought about by the wishes of the Sovereign, the great financial aid that Belgium had given the Congo Free State at a difficult moment, and the ever-growing consciousness that the Belgian people felt, at the beginning of this century, of their responsibilities in regard to this African achievement.

After laborious negotiations, in the course of which the minister Beernert gave the King effectual support, on August 20, 1908 Parliament passed the law providing for the annexation of the Congo. On November 13 of the same year the Congo Free State ceased to exist and became the « Belgian Congo ».

## B.

### Early Progress of the Belgian Congo.

Belgium was now in possession of a territory eighty times as large as herself. A great deal had already been achieved there ; a great deal remained to be done.

What did Belgium find when she took stock of the country she received from her King ?

The raids and the slave trade had been checked. A solid network of administrative posts and a diligent military occupation had established peace where the first explorers had found only terror and permanent insecurity. Religious missions, Catholic and Protestant, had undertaken the work of preaching the gospel; schools and dispensaries had been opened. Furthermore, commerce and industry were beginning to be organized. The official medical services had undertaken a struggle against the diseases that were decimating the population. Everywhere the material and moral condition of the natives had been bettered, and the reforms decided upon in 1906 by Leopold II were being applied.

What needed to be done was therefore to develop and improve the work that had already been undertaken. The foundations had been laid ; the edifice needed to be completed.

It was the first Belgian minister of the colonies, Jules Renkin, who gave this new phase its first impetus.

Leopold II had died in December 1909, a year after the annexation ; Albert I succeeded him. The young sovereign gave Renkin his entire support.

A succession of events marks the stages that paved the way for this annexation.

The point of departure goes back to 1889. In that year Leopold II had made a will in which he declared that he « bequeathed and transmitted to Belgium, after his death, all his sovereign rights over the Congo Free State. »

The following year, the agreement of July 5, 1890 constituted another step forward for Belgium. By this agreement, the Belgian government lent the sum of 25,000,000 francs to the Congo Free State.

As a guarantee for this loan, Belgium was given an option which assured her the right to annex the Congo at the end of ten years. This possible annexation was not without conditions, notably the condition that the debt contracted would be extinguished through integration.

A new stage was reached in 1901. At that time the agreement of 1900 came into effect, and Belgium was free to exercise its option. A motion in favor of annexation had already been brought up in Parliament when Leopold II, while confirming his testament and reaffirming Belgium's right to annex the Congo Free State, requested that annexation be postponed until the moment when the Congo would be truly productive. As a matter of fact, the King wanted to avoid the dangers involved in a hasty and badly prepared annexation.

Defering to the King's wishes, Parliament then instructed a committee made up of deputies belonging to all parties to prepare a bill on « the government of the colonial possessions of Belgium ». Thus began the last stage of the evolution. The campaigns launched against the system set up in the Congo contributed to precipitate events, and on December 3, 1907 the bill was submitted to the Chamber of Deputies. This bill authorized the cession to Belgium of « the sovereignty over the territories comprising the Congo Free State, with all the rights and obligations appurtenant thereto ».



After that, the Belgian government could legitimately abandon its « wait and see » attitude and give the Congolese troops the order to take the offensive. In the west, as early as October 1914, a detachment joined the Franco-British troops who were attacking German Cameroon. This detachment participated in the capture of the Sangha and co-operated in the encirclement of the enemy forces until the fall of Yaounde, in January 1916. Meanwhile, two Congo companies went to the aid of the English in Rhodesia, where the Germans had attacked Abercorn; this Belgian intervention resulted in driving the Germans out of the British territory.

These first two Belgian campaigns thus ended in victory. A large-scale offensive was to follow them.

As a matter of fact, while these expeditions in Cameroon and Rhodesia were taking place, other Belgian forces stationed in the East of the Congo were preparing, in conjunction with the English, a powerful attack against German East Africa.

This offensive began in August 1916. The Congolese troops, commanded by General Tombeur, were divided in two brigades: one, the northern brigade, under the orders of Colonel Molitor, was to march to Lake Victoria; the other, the southern brigade, under the command of Colonel Olsen, had as its objective the railroad connecting Tanganyika with the Indian Ocean. Lake Victoria was reached after hard fighting, while the southern brigade captured Kigoma. The two brigades, uniting their efforts, converged toward Tabora where the center of German resistance was concentrated. On September 19, 1916, Tabora fell. Shortly after, the Belgian government placed Tabora in the hands of the British authorities. The objective gained, the bulk of the troops returned to their bases in the Congo.

But several months later, in August 1917, the German forces commanded by General von Lettow-Vorbeck launched

The first important reform occurred in 1910 by means of a body of decrees tending to do away with all obstacles that hampered free commerce, to replace the tax in kind by a tax in money, and to introduce a system of indirect administration in the districts under the rule of native chieftains.

At the same time, a new stimulus was given to the colony's economy. Private commerce grew, the use of money among the natives became general, new railroad lines covered the entire eastern part of the Colony, and telegraphic communications were established connecting Katanga with the Atlantic coast.

Agriculture itself was undergoing a change. The rudimentary practice of food-gathering was being replaced by the raising of food crops and products for industrial purposes.

At the same time the mining industry was becoming increasingly important. To the riches already prospected, diamonds were added; and then, in 1911, the first casting of Katanga copper took place.

The future of the country looked bright when war broke out in 1914.

## C. World War I (1914-1918).

The Act of Berlin of 1885 imposed neutrality on the conventional basin of the Congo. Because of this obligation the Belgian government had, at the beginning of World War I, called upon the Congo to maintain a strictly defensive attitude toward the German forces stationed in Africa.

But as early as August 1914, the Germans made incursions into the Congo by crossing its eastern frontier, thus violating the neutrality of the Colony.



Economically, the Congo after World War I was open to broader and more fruitful exploitation. At that time there were already nearly two thousand business firms. This progress kept increasing until the time of the world-wide depression of 1930-1935. The consequences of this depression were very serious for the Congo because its prosperity depended essentially on the exportation of raw materials. The Congo had to wait a long time — in fact, until the events of 1940 — to see a complete business recovery take place. However, even in the midst of the depression the task of strengthening the economic structure of the colony went on without respite.

As early as 1920, the second minister of the colonies, Louis Franck, had undertaken a vast program of public works: equipping the ports, developing communications, encouraging air navigation. At the same time he fostered agriculture, notably cotton growing, which would bring resources to entire regions. He backed up this economic program with a sound policy in regard to the natives that led to the stabilization of the native centers and an improvement in the living conditions of the workmen.

Things were going well for the Congo, and the Colony enjoyed an era of prosperity which lasted until about 1930. During that period, the development of Kivu was undertaken; large scale stock-raising began in Katanga; coffee plantations and palm tree products ranked high, together with cotton, in Congolese economy. The railroad to the Cape, which by 1910 had already reached the Katanga frontier, was prolonged across Congolese territory as far as Fort-Franqui on the Kasai, thus linking the mining provinces and the Atlantic on national soil. Shortly after, another railroad, starting from Lobito and crossing Portuguese Angola, reached the Congo also and joined the line from Katanga. Finally, in 1925, Belgium was for the first time connected with the Congo by air.

At the same time important scientific and humanitarian institutions were created which strengthened the work already achieved in Africa.

such a vigorous counter-offensive that the British government was compelled to turn again to the Belgians for help. The Congolese troops, which had been demobilized at the end of the campaign of 1916, were rapidly reconstituted and, under the command of General Huyghe, they took up the fight again. Once more they were victorious. Huyghe soon captured Mahenge, and the fleeing enemy was driven as far as Mozambique. The armistice of November 11, 1918 put an end to the last skirmishes.

Crowning the important part that Belgium had played in the African war, the Peace Conference, meeting in 1919, gave her a mandate over the former German territories of Ruanda-Urundi, which are today territories under trusteeship.

## D.

### The Congo between the two World Wars.

The war had destroyed the validity of the Act of Berlin. It was replaced in September 1919 by the Convention of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The latter reserved the system of the open door for commerce in the Congo basin exclusively for the signatory countries and for the members of the League of Nations adhering to the Convention; furthermore it authorized Belgium to fix customs duties in the Congo for ships and merchandise.

From that moment on the Congo underwent a remarkable economic development; the relaxing of the Dracomian regime imposed by the Act of Berlin was unquestionably one of the reasons for this increased prosperity which was accompanied by tremendous progress in administrative organization, social life, and scientific research.



through the depression with flying colors and its economic position was getting stronger. The entire country was criss-crossed with networks of rivers, roads, and railroads, linking and prolonging each other from one frontier to another. Air communications were being established. Schools, hospitals, and dispensaries were multiplying, while the first cities were taking shape. Finally, a flexible body of laws guaranteed at one and the same time the protection of native communities remaining faithful to their traditional organization, that of workers engaged in new ways of life, and also that of the first centers where urban life was coming into existence. This was a varied and expedient policy, resting simultaneously on tradition and on evolution. It has turned out well and has assured an era of peace and tranquility that has never been seriously disturbed.

This favorable situation enabled the Congo to be equipped for the exceptional effort that was later required of it in the course of World War II.

## F. World War II (1940-1945).

The Congo's participation in World War I had been military above all. In World War II, its participation was total: it contributed the wealth of its mines, plantations and forests; the tireless activity of its population — both white and black; its soldiers and its weapons.

On May, 10, 1940, the invasion of Belgium by the Germans had suddenly cut off all relations between the Congo and the Mother Country. However, at that moment the Congolese frontiers were not directly menaced, the nearest enemy being the Italian troops of East Africa. But, conscious of the gravity of the

Such was the Congo on the eve of the world-wide depression. It was a modernized country that exported, by means of an ever-growing network of communications, the products of its plantations and the rich raw materials obtained from its mines. Peace reigned and the living conditions of the inhabitants were constantly improving.

The depression menaced the very existence of most of the mining and agricultural enterprises. The government had to take liberal measures of financial aid in order to mitigate the catastrophe. But at this moment of imminent disaster, important initiatives continued to be undertaken. Indeed, it was at this very time that the traditional native communities as well as new population centers were organized on sound bases. It was also at this time that increased medical aid was given to the native population. Especially noteworthy was the Queen Elizabeth Fund established to give medical aid to the natives. Furthermore, the future King Leopold III, who had just returned from a journey to the Congo — in 1933 — made an important speech. Its subject was twofold: putting Congolese agriculture in the hands of the native peasantry and preparing the natives to become real estate owners in a more or less distant future. These aims still inspire the policy of Belgium toward the Congo. In addition, important organizations for scientific research were created at this time: the Institute of National Parks which established vast reserves for the protection of the flora and fauna of the Colony, and the National Institute for the Agronomical Study of the Belgian Congo whose aim was the scientific development of agriculture.

When the depression was over, the Congo slowly regained its prosperity, which continued until the war. Mining and agricultural production again increased, communications were consolidated, and Belgium took a more and more important part in commercial exchanges.

In fact, at the time World War II began, the colony's balance sheet showed an appreciable surplus. The Congo had come



by sea and partly by land, they reached the Middle East. Six thousand soldiers skirted Africa by sea, while a convoy of more than a thousand vehicles, in a spectacular dash that was a vertible sporting exploit, crossed the Sudanese deserts and reached Khartoum, and from there Cairo.

The effectives of two brigades remained in the Middle East for nearly two years. In Egypt and Palestine they relieved important missions in the way of guard duty and surveillance. Secret plans that were ready for combat duty and performed important provided for their possible participation in a Balkan campaign, but there, too, events moved rapidly. The Italian offensive and the landing in Normandy created new situations. Their mission fulfilled, the Congolese troops were repatriated without having seen the battlefields of Europe.

However, even in the Far East the Congolese soldiers made their appearance during the war. As a matter of fact, under the command of Medical Officer Thomas, a field hospital brought from the Congo gave the Allies constant co-operation on the East African fronts, at the landing in Madagascar, and finally, at the height of the war with Japan, in the Burmese jungle where it covered itself with glory.

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While the military forces of the Congo were crossing the frontiers in successive waves to reach their objectives, work was going on full blast within the country. Its entire productive capacity was devoted to the war effort. Gold, tin, cobalt, tungsten, copal, palm oil, and rubber were put at the disposal of the Allies. In all sectors of the Colony's economic life there was but one aim: to throw into the battle all its wealth; to supply ceaselessly all the factories beyond the seas which were furnishing materiel, food, and munitions to the combatants; and to make up for all the shortages caused by the loss of those countries of the Far East that had fallen into the hands of the Japanese and from which oil and rubber had previously come.

situation, Governor General Rycckmans, as early as May 18, deliberately placed the Congo at the side of the Allies who were continuing the struggle.

During these years, military and civilian mobilization changed the face of the country.

After a period of concentration the Congolese troops crossed the frontiers in February 1941 and attacked the Italian centers in Abyssinia. Co-operating with the British command, a battalion which had covered over a thousand miles across the burning plains of the Sudan won the victories of Asosa and Gambela; other elements followed and went up the line.

At this moment the Italians, hard-pressed on the east by the English, were pushed toward the positions held by the Belgians in the region of Sato; it was there that they met defeat. Indeed, under the command of General Gilliaert and Colonel Dronckers-Martens, the Congolese troops besieged Sato and stormed the place. On July 3 Sato fell. An Italian army of nine generals, about four hundred officers and soldiers, and over three thousand five commissioned officers and soldiers, and over three thousand five hundred auxiliaries surrendered to the Belgians. This crushing victory led to the surrender of all the Italian troops stationed south of the Blue Nile.

A few months later new Belgian effectives embarked at Matadi. A complete expeditionary corps was to take up a waiting position in British Nigeria at the frontier of Dahomey, which was under Vichy control. In principle, it was to take its place in a vast manoeuvre aimed at encircling the French colonies that had not yet gone over to the Allied camp. However, the acceleration of events, the landing in North Africa, the winning over of Dakar which entailed that of the neighboring territories, soon rendered needless the intervention of this expeditionary corps. At the beginning of 1943 the Congolese troops left Nigeria. Partly



At the time the war ended there was thus a profound evolution in gestation. It was paving the way for the post-war Congo, a Congo with a new face, sure of itself, strong in material wealth and eager to play its part in a universe that had itself undergone a profound change in the course of a few years. Starting from authoritarianism and having reached the stage where patrimonialism could be relaxed, too young and also too heterogeneous in its makeup to throw itself deliberately and completely into a democratic way of life, it was now an adolescent country ready to embark on adult life. The World War had opened a new era for it in every field.

## F.

### Progress and Problems of the Congo after World War II

After the cessation of hostilities, the Congo entered a period of propitious circumstances marked by a steady increase in exports, very sound financial conditions, and great progress in public and private investments.

Some figures illustrate the Colony's progress and prosperity. The value of the Congo's exports, which had been two and a quarter billion francs in 1938, on the eve of the war, increased to ten billion in 1948 and twenty-seven billion in 1956. This was a tenfold increase in less than twenty years. The budgetary receipts which had amounted to 826 million francs in 1937 rose to twelve billion by the end of the same period. Furthermore, disbursements in the course of the past few years have been lower than receipts, resulting in a series of accumulated surpluses: this situation lasted until the middle of 1907 at which time the effects of the world-wide depression were felt in the Congo.

Doubtless the prosperity of the Congolese economy is still based essentially on exports, but the structure of this economy

But at the same time, as a consequence of the situation, new phenomena made their appearance within the Congo. The interruption in economic relations with Belgium had changed the course of business. On the one hand, imports were relying on new sources, especially on America, which was getting a foothold in the Congolese market and was discovering the potentialities of Africa. On the other hand, the Congo's industrial structure itself was undergoing a change. Until then the Congo had been above all a supplier of raw materials and a purchaser of manufactured goods; now it was beginning to set up its own factories and meet the needs of its home market. An awareness of its possibilities and of its place in the world was being born and becoming stronger.

Simultaneously, on the social level, another kind of awareness was coming to light. The worker, white or black, was beginning to assert his rights, and labor unions were being organized. This could not take place without clashes and unrest. The same thing happens in all the countries of the world when social classes are being formed. In a country which until then had lived in accordance with a strictly colonial pattern, the dawn of democracy was now being witnessed.

A more important fact was that at the same time, especially in the urban centers, the hold of the clans on the natives was being broken and individualism was being born among the Congolese. Furthermore, all this was accompanied by the formation of a young native elite just out of school. The effort that had been demanded of this young elite with the aid of vigorous propaganda had made the Congolese understand that they were a great deal more than mere cells embedded in the collectivity of the native clans; that they were indeed above all individuals whose actions could have repercussions extending to the ends of the earth, individuals that the « free world » had needed to win the war. This feeling, still confused and embryonic in rural areas, was getting stronger and stronger in the cities where youth, coming from different regions, was beginning to compare experiences and opinions.