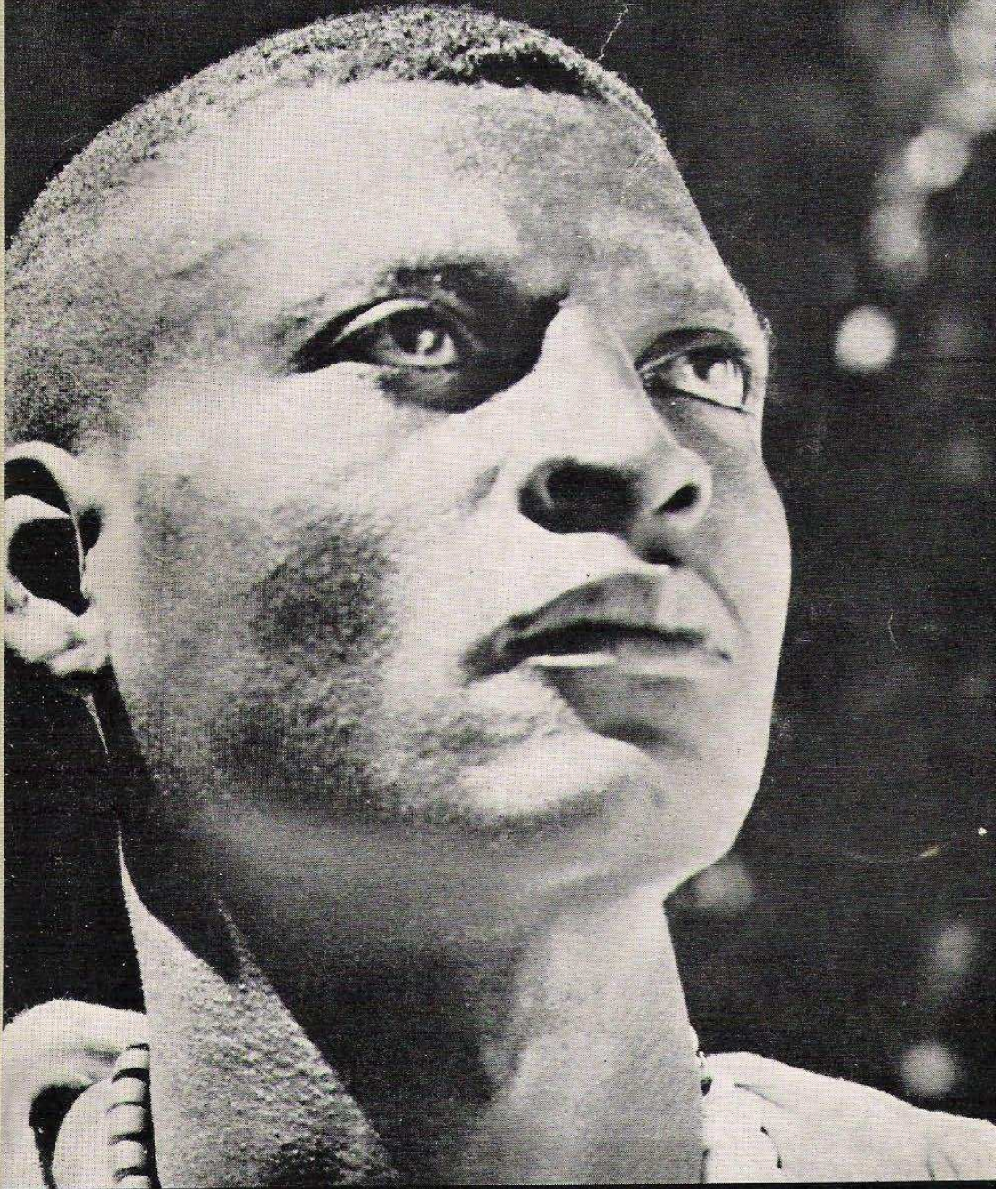


DEAN H. ELLIS LIBRARY  
ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

# BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY



7.5  
4D

by

ALBERT DE VLEESCHAUWER



Art, Life and Science in Belgium  
and the Belgian Congo.—II.

# BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY

by

Albert De Vleeschauer

MINISTER OF COLONIES

PUBLISHED BY THE  
BELGIAN INFORMATION CENTER

630 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK

1943

ARKANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS



DT  
1661  
.V553

## BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY

**B**EFORE the present war, some countries still believed in the idea of the expansion of the mother country, a belief which was responsible for the greater part of colonial enterprise.

This need for expansion, or desire for "vital space," was still characteristic of certain nations up to the eve of the present war. For then the popular way of procuring colonies still consisted in a recourse to arms by which a country was taken from its natural, if primitive, inhabitants or from a weaker colonial power. The procedure was responsible for the shameful war on Abyssinia. The idea, even now, is doubtless not completely dead. Where it survives, it is probably being discussed in secret and with a sense of shame, for the general opinion of the United Nations is that such a procedure can no longer be tolerated.

Opinions have changed, and now even the word "colony" has grown almost unbearable to some people. The word implies a dependence, a negation of human freedom and of human equality that is distasteful.

Facts, however, are still facts. The history of human evolution and progress has recorded a phase of colonization in non-European countries by overcivilized Europe. History has also shown that it takes time before a colonial enterprise can develop into a country of sufficient stature to stand by itself and take its place in what we choose to call the civilized world.

That mistakes were committed before such stature was attained is of course true but let it suffice here to say that it is of no avail to point out others' mistakes in order to hide graver faults elsewhere, made, perhaps, by oneself.

If the word "colony" is displeasing, the various tongues are adept enough to find a more agreeable term. But the fact remains that there are still regions in the world which are in the colonial stage of their evolution, and any termination of this stage would throw

*Albert de Vleeschhauer, Belgian Minister of Colonies, was born at Nederbrakel, Jan. 1, 1897. He was called to the Bar at Louvain in 1923. In 1929 he was appointed Professor of Commercial Law at Louvain University and of Economics at its Agricultural Institute.*

*He became a member of Parliament in 1923 and has been Minister of Colonies since May 1938. In that capacity he is a member of the Belgian Government in London. He visited the Belgian Congo in 1941 and 1942.*

Photo on cover by André Cauvin

UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS



## BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY

the people of these regions back into the barbarism from whence they came, bringing about a disastrous regression in their steps toward civilization.

Let us, therefore, tolerate, for the time being, the use of the words "colony" and "colonization," remembering that were some alternative expression to be invented at this moment, the only result would be total confusion.

A colony is not—or rather, is no longer and can no longer be—a territory which its conquerors regard as their personal property, to be kept for their own, egoistic interests. A colony is still less a possession that other conquerors can covet and steal from its rightful guardian who has assumed responsibility for it.

To colonize is to bring civilization to primitive peoples who have hitherto been unable to emerge by their own means from the stage of barbarism in which they have stagnated for centuries. Colonization is a work, a great work in the service and interest of the primitive populations of which the colonizer has taken charge.

But why this particular colonizer and not another who would seek to displace him? This can be answered by the historic origin of the territory's occupation. This occupation should have been marked by activity beneficial to the native population, and only the positive or negative results of this activity can form a reasonable basis of judgment for those interested in the welfare of colonial peoples.

### History of the Belgian Congo

Before discussing the work of the Belgian Colonial Administration it might be well to retrace briefly the history of the Central African occupation.

The Congo was only scientifically explored as recently as the 19th century. This, however, does not mean that up to then it was completely unknown to the outside world. In the 17th century, Capuchin missionaries from the Belgian provinces had already begun the religious conversion of part of the Congo population.

## BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY



LEOPOLD II, KING OF THE BELGIANS, FOUNDER OF THE BELGIAN CONGO



## BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY



CONGOLESE MOTHER AND CHILD

[ 6 ]

## BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY

If the trips of the great explorers of Central Africa during the second half of the 19th century did not particularly interest the great powers of the time, they did, however, arouse the enthusiasm of the King of the Belgians, Leopold II. A Geographical Conference was called in Brussels in 1876, and the *Association Internationale Africaine* and a Belgian National Committee of the *Association Internationale* were founded. The Belgian National Committee sent its first expedition to the east African coast, and from 1876 to 1884 a series of expeditions were organized, resulting in the establishment of the first of the posts which were to civilize the country.

The sensational arrival of Stanley at Boma in April 1877 resulted in an increased interest in African exploration. In November 1878, King Leopold formed the *Comité d'Etudes du Haut-Congo*, and in the following year a Belgian expedition under the command of Stanley penetrated into Central Africa by way of the west coast and founded the settlements of Vivi and Leopoldville. The expeditions led by Stanley or by his Belgian colleagues pushed along the upper river, linked Banana in the west to Stanley Falls in the east, Bangala in the north to Luluburg in the south, and made the blue flag with the gold star of the *Association Internationale du Congo* known throughout the center of Africa.

The United States of America was the first country to recognize on the 10th of April, 1884, the flag of the *Association* as equal to that of a friendly government. On the 8th of November, 1884, Germany recognized the colors of the *Association* as those of a friendly state, and, on the 16th of December, 1884, the same recognition was granted by Her Britannic Majesty's Government. Recognition by the other powers followed rapidly, and on the 23rd of February, 1885, Colonel Strauch, president of the *Association*, was able to notify the Berlin Conference (which had begun its work on November 15, 1884) that all the powers (except one) represented at the conference had recognized the *Association Internationale du Congo* as a sovereign state. On August 1, 1885, and on following dates, Leopold II, King of the

[ 7 ]