

Belgians, notified the powers that the possessions of the *Association* from that time forward would form the Independent State of the Congo and that, with the consent of the *Association*, he had taken the title of Sovereign of the Independent State of the Congo.

### Two Aspects of Colonization

The head of the new African state realized from the beginning that the two main aspects of colonization were social and intellectual civilization and the development of natural wealth. The two should be inseparable. The development of natural wealth should pay for the growth of civilization. This precept was followed from the beginning.

The sovereign found himself charged with an immense territory, covered by dense forests and bush and crossed by a great river. His first task was to occupy and bring order and peace to the length and breadth of this vast land. Without loss of time the King began his great task.

Realizing that "to colonize is to transport," he began the construction, in 1890, of the railroad of the lower Congo to overcome the un navigable rapids of the river. This railroad, 250 miles long, joined Matadi and Leopoldville and allowed the long navigable course of the upper river to find its outlet to the sea.

From 1890 also dated the foundation of the *Compagnie du Katanga* which was to give birth to the *Union Minière* and the copper industry.

It was also during 1890 that the Arab campaign began. It lasted four years, freeing millions of Negroes from slavery and ridding Africa of the slave trade.

At this time the new state had little or no resources, for the great powers had taken measures to prevent it from taxing exports. This would have been one of the most obvious ways for the new state to obtain revenue. To meet all the demands and costs, the King invested his entire fortune in the work—and, at a certain

period, he even sold his private belongings to that end. But even this proved inadequate, and he was forced to call in Belgian and foreign financiers to whom he accorded certain territorial concessions. Abuses resulted which were taken up and exaggerated by interested parties in order to discredit the King and his work. To this day, people still occasionally make the old allegations, without bothering to check their veracity. Belgium has openly stated her disapproval of all past abuses and were any to be committed today, immediate and severe punishment would follow. There are many dark annals in colonial history. But one should not forget the circumstances under which abuses occurred.

During this same period the work of civilization was being carried on by the state. Internal wars and intertribal strife were prohibited. The administration of justice was founded to protect both the person and the property of the native.

In 1908 Belgium itself took over the great work of colonial enterprise begun by its far-seeing King.

A new era began in the development of the Belgian Congo, but was soon interrupted by the Great War of 1914-18 in which the Belgian Congo distinguished itself by its victorious campaign in East Africa.

After the first World War the progress of colonization took on added impetus. It was at this time that the great powers awarded Belgium the mandate of a part of those territories which the Belgian Colonial Army had taken from the Germans in East Africa. This territory, Ruanda-Urundi, which has an area of some 32,000 square miles, has a population of some three and a half million people who possess a million head of cattle.

With a regime specially suited to the origin of the new territory, Belgium adapted her colonial principles to local conditions and put them into effect in Ruanda-Urundi.

Conscious of her responsibilities as a colonial power, Belgium has striven, and strives today, to ameliorate the lives and conditions of the native inhabitants by developing the moral, social and material well-being of both individuals and groups and organizing the great expanse of the country materially and economically.



## Communications

An efficient system of communication is obviously the best means of reaching the native population in the most remote regions of the country, and is absolutely essential in exploiting new and un-

touched areas. As stated before, the railway of the lower Congo was begun in 1890. This railway was completely rebuilt after the last war and is now a great and busy system of ultramodern communication, with a large number of bustling stations that have few equals in the most civilized countries of Europe or America. This line has not remained the only one. At the moment the Belgian Congo has over 3,200 miles of railways which link the transport systems of the great waterways.

Moreover, some 50,000 miles of highway have been built throughout the Congo. One cannot stress too much the economic and social importance of such a system of communications which is expanded each year. The road develops the region, bringing in administration, medicine, religion, education and insuring supply. Under German control the Ruanda-Urundi, rich in population and cattle, was the frequent victim of famines which followed prolonged droughts. These famines claimed at that time over 25 per cent of the population.

The Germans had not been interested in building roads, and it had not been possible, therefore, to aid the distressed and famine-stricken areas. Since Belgium has had charge of the territory over 5,600 miles of roads have been built which are among the finest in Central Africa and which reach every part of the country. There have been, as in the past, periods of drought followed by crop failures, but the consequences are no longer fatal and help can arrive quickly to save the population from the specter of famine and the cattle from destruction.

Railways and roads link and complement the system of navigable waterways which run for 8,000 miles through the Belgian Congo. A fleet of about 1,400 boats and barges continually plies up and down the river. In April 1943, the traffic amounted to 15,170 tons per month up river and 20,566 tons down river.

Finally, the most rapid means of communication, the airplane, has been used to overcome the obstacle of great distance.

The Congo was among the first of the African colonies to use air transport for its lines of inner communication. At the present time these lines are impressive enough. They stretch over 5,400 miles and consist of 195 principal and auxiliary airfields. The lines are as well linked with the north as with the south, and planes from the Congo are responsible for the line from Cairo to Central Africa. Other planes link Leopoldville and the Cape of Good Hope. Besides this, a new trans-Atlantic service has been inaugurated between the United States and the Congo and linked up with the European line.

**Hygiene**  
By a well-developed system of transport the colonizer can ensure the physical well-being of the native.

Hygiene which is so important for people in every part of the world is particularly so for those primitive populations in tropical climates which are still unaware of its application.

When the Belgians took over the Congo they found it riddled by such contagious or endemic diseases as sleeping sickness, dysentery, leprosy, malaria, smallpox, venereal diseases, now tribes were wiped out by plagues. There are certain regions, now prosperous, where formerly nine tenths of the natives died of disease. It was once thought that these regions would have to be abandoned, but the determination of the colonizers overcame the scourge, and the districts now boast healthy and happy populations. Even more tribes would have disappeared without the coming of the whites, for they were infected from the beginning and were themselves the cause of their own doom. Other tribes, however, kept themselves fairly well and quickly improved themselves under our control.

The Belgian Congo medical service today comprises:

a) The work of over 4,000 missionaries who have organized dispensaries, hospitals and maternity centers for their charges.



b) The medical services of the big companies which assure for their workers a standard of hygiene and medical attention unapproached in many civilized countries.

c) The Foreami—*Fonds de la Reine Elisabeth d'assistance médicale aux Indigènes*—a state fund which the government subscribes for the safeguard of native health. The Foreami literally occupies entire regions and may stay there for years until conditions are judged to be completely satisfactory. The standard is then maintained by the regular health service.

d) The Government Health Service is the most important of all various services and consists of 300 doctors and 150 health officers who administer eight huge hospitals, 36 ordinary hospitals and 383 dispensaries. In 1937 over 1,000,000 natives received treatment in these government institutions and only 6,000 deaths were recorded, or less than one per cent.

In 1939 just before the war an American doctor in Washington, who had been studying in Europe and had also visited the Congo, stated that he greatly esteemed the medical corps in Belgium but thought that the Congo medical corps was even better.

In 1926 yellow fever ravaged Matadi and many of the white settlers died. Today mosquito netting is no longer needed. A recent visitor to the School for young girls in Leopoldville was impressed by the fact that there were no mosquito nets in the dormitory, and this during the rainy season. When he remarked on it he was told that such measures were no longer necessary.

In close collaboration with neighboring countries, checks are made on all reported cases of yellow fever, the disastrous consequences of which are well known. Since the outbreak of war only one or two cases have been reported throughout the country, in spite of the great amount of travel that has been going on. Outside of the possibility of a plague, it may be stated that contagious or endemic diseases are completely under control in the Belgian Congo. Leprosy alone remains to be conquered.

[ 12 ]

Modern science is fighting it with all the means at its disposal. The ravages of the disease are limited but they still exist, as they do in other countries.

### Education

The work of civilization is obviously greatly dependent on the education of the native. This is an essential part of the colonizer's work. Everyone speaks of its importance, but it is often discussed without any knowledge of the subject.

When bringing education to a primitive people, one cannot begin by founding universities on the European style.

In the Belgian Congo where a start from scratch was made not so very long ago, the main concern is the establishment of primary education.

In more than 5,000 schools there are 1,000,000 pupils, and these are conservative figures in spite of the more impressive ones given by philanthropic organizations which are doing a valuable job. It is a useful and necessary, but still only a preparatory task. This limited scholastic population nevertheless represents some 15 per cent of the total population of the Congo and the Ruanda-Urundi.

Of what value is this education? Practical results are of prime importance. Reading, writing, mathematics and general instruction are taught.

Beyond this, a fewer number of schools furnish secondary education, give instruction in technical subjects or train future teachers. For the most part, special emphasis is placed on professional training in modern agriculture and trade.

Three schools offer a curriculum equal to university standards for the most relatively advanced of the natives. There is the School of Astrida where a more general knowledge is taught, giving particular help to those interested in public administration, agriculture and veterinary medicine. There are schools for native medical assistants, known as Ami, at Leopoldville and at Kisantu. These call for five years of study, and those who graduate become

[ 13 ]



## BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY

official assistants to the white doctors, rendering a great service in the hospitals and dispensaries and in the bush. They are always supervised by a white doctor.

To indicate the value of this education, a recent occurrence in one of the schools serves as an example. State doctors who came to test the pupils' knowledge took a recently-arrived hospital case as their subject. The five native students, questioned separately, all gave the same diagnosis. The state doctors judged them wrong and reported the result to the director of the school. Surprised, the director asked the doctors if *they* had not made a mistake. Taking them to the hospital they checked up. The five students had been correct.

There are other schools which, although of a lower standard than the Arm, still render valuable aid in preparing male nurses. The minor seminaries and the five major seminaries where Catholic missionaries instruct a future native clergy should also be mentioned. Here education consists of the complete Latin humanities, philosophy, and several years of theology. The results are admirable, and every year several highly-cultured priests swell the ranks of the missionaries. This is done without state aid.

The educational progress of the Congo is constant, and efforts at improvement are continually being made. It is generally admitted that in no other African colony is education as widespread.

## Social Policy

Another aspect of native social work is the protection of the worker. Characteristic of the Belgian Congo is the contrast between a primitive country and population and an industrial concentration comparable to that of the most advanced countries. This industrial development, due to the mineral wealth of the Congo, nevertheless forms the basis of a social danger. The local labor, responsible for the manual work in mines and plants, is of a fragile nature. Before the arrival of the white man the native had little feeling of individuality. He lived with his family and tribe in primitive surroundings. The recruiting of labor for the

[14]

## BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY



THE BELGIAN CONGO CITIES ARE WELL LAID OUT AND COMPRISE WIDE AVENUES AND MODERN BUILDINGS

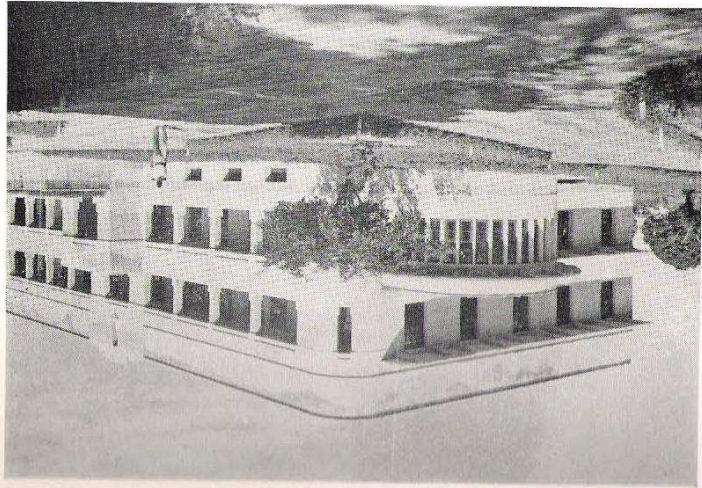


THIS SQUARE IN THE CONGO'S CAPITAL, LEOPOLDVILLE, RECALLS ANY SQUARE IN A MODERN CITY

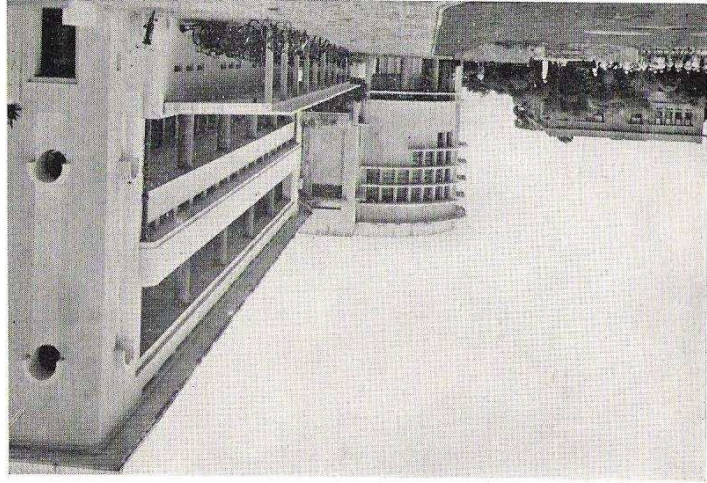
[15]



BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY



THE BELGIAN CONGO HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS THE MOST MODERN OF AFRICAN COLONIES. BUILDINGS LIKE THIS CONTRIBUTE TO THAT IMPRESSION

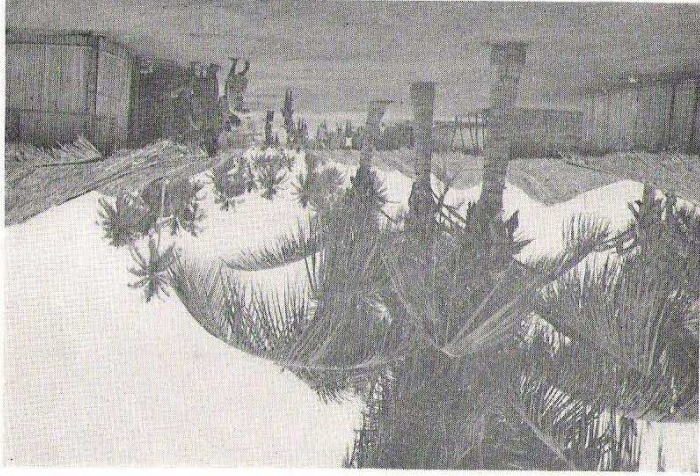


THE MOST UP TO DATE SCHOOL IN AFRICA IS AT LEOPOLDVILLE, CAPITAL OF THE BELGIAN CONGO

BELGIAN COLONIAL POLICY



THE FIRST RAILWAY IN THE BELGIAN CONGO WAS BUILT IN 1890. TODAY THERE ARE 3,200 MILES OF RAILWAYS IN THE COLONY



OUTLYING NATIVE VILLAGES IN THE BELGIAN CONGO HAVE KEPT ALL THEIR ANCIENT CHARM AND BEAUTY