

**POLE INSTITUTE**  
GOMA

**Democratic Republic of Congo :**  
**Peace tomorrow?**

**GOMA**  
March 2003

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## Editorial

At a time when the catastrophic war in Iraq has everyone's attention, and when « small » African tragedies risk being forgotten, we choose to offer you here a volume of political analysis on the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Pole Institute is struggling today – as are all Congolese of good will – in the torment of a Congo that is becoming ever more fragmented and torn apart by violence and predatory interests. Our members and researchers no longer attach much importance to the papers that are signed in peaceful and luxurious locations, but at the same time they have not lost all hope for the future of their children. That is why we have decided in this volume to publish analyses and political reflections that try to look behind the façade, and to dig deeply to identify the roots of the problems. We also think that in order to be actors and not victims of these processes, we should face our own responsibilities as Congolese and civilian actors in the Great Lakes region.

The interviews and articles in this issue were produced and written between October 2002 and March 2003, in a situation characterized by tremendous disturbances and ruptures:

- The Manager of Pole Institute, Aloys Tegera, considers the present situation in North Kivu against the background of the history of the region, and offers us an analysis of “A rebellion within a rebellion”.
- Bernard Kitambala, a member from South Kivu, sketches the political, social, economic and cultural situation of the South, of which people speak too often in empty slogans without touching the concrete reality that the population is experiencing, and especially without talking about the failures of civil society and the opportunities that are theirs.
- The member in charge of Information, Onesphore Sematumba, examines the situation in Ituri and analyses “A war within a war”.
- The President of Pole Institute, Dr Jo Lusi, returning from a visit to Ituri where he worked for many years, gives an up-to-date account of his reactions and feelings; his dialogue with his colleague Aloys Tegera touches the history of the country and the region, and goes as far as to analyse the Berlin Conference, in the style of frank and liberating exchange which our Institute has been able to develop.
- The interview with Faustin Buunda Ndyanabo, President of the Provincial Assembly for North Kivu, was conducted in order to discover the potential and the limits of such an institution in a country completely torn apart, with no democratically elected organs.
- Christiane Kayser, member of Pole Institute, examines the crucial problem of the looting of the natural resources of Congo, and the strategies that must be developed to put a stop to it. Her article is the translation of a conference held in Germany.
- Dominic Johnson, associate researcher for Pole Institute, and editor of a German daily “Die Tageszeitung”, gives us an analysis of the current situation in the region, the role of the international powers, and the traps to avoid. His article is also the translation of a conference held in Germany.

- Finally, our colleague Jean-Pierre Kabirigi, living in the United States, gives us the point of view of the outsider on the global picture of the slide of our country into a cycle of dependence – exploitation. When will we see the realization of that 'lipanda' to whose rhythms the contemporaries of Patrice Lumumba danced on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1960?

We thank Lyn Lusi in Goma and Chantal Abu Eische in Hebron for the French translations of the last two articles. It is not by chance that they demonstrate our Institute's openness to the world and the diversity of its networks.

In the same way that the war in Iraq clearly has its causes in the economy and the oil industry, Congo's war cannot be separated from economic concerns and oil; the war in Ituri, especially, is swimming in oil. We draw your attention to the fact that we have just published the results of our research on the case of petroleum and Heritage Oil (available in English and French) which goes more deeply into some of the elements contained in the articles of this issue.

We have to say that all the contributors to this issue seem to be in agreement on the necessity of working at the local level, in a decentralized way, while remaining aware of the macro aspects, the national and international aspects of the problems. It is also interesting to see that, of necessity, we turn to history to elucidate and analyse current events. And thirdly, everyone persists in the belief that a multi-ethnic community, of peace and dignity, is possible in the future. But when will tomorrow come?

Be encouraged, all of you.

Aloys Tegera  
Christiane Kayser  
Onesphore Sematumba

Goma, March 2003

## North Kivu: a rebellion within a rebellion?

It is rare for 'Gomatraciens' (the name given to the inhabitants of Goma town, located at the foot of Nyiragongo volcano), these people inured to the struggle for survival, to comment passionately on any local political news in North Kivu. One of these rare occasions was 11<sup>th</sup> December 2001, which will always have a place in the chronicles of North Kivu. It was the day Eugène Serufuli Ngayabaseka, Governor of North Kivu, presented and defended his budget before the Provincial Assembly, appointed by decree No. 47 of 16<sup>th</sup> September 2001, and set up officially on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2001. In the budget forecast of 3 million US dollars, almost one third, over 950000\$, were allocated to the functioning of the office of the governor. The members of the Assembly asked many questions; where was the spirit of self-sacrifice in a governor's office that keeps for itself a third of the operating budget. The governor, in his defense, explained that the budget line of **mobilization** included the money needed to recruit young men into the army of the RCD. An experienced local politician, Thomas Kibira, answered back with the question: How could the prerogative of the Minister of Defense become the concern of the provincial governor? The governor's answer was a self-justification, based on the fact that if young men from certain ethnic groups do not want to enroll in the army, that does not mean that they should not be enrolled and trained if they are ready to offer their services. The governor's answer was an allusion to the unease of the populations of the province who consider the majority of the recruits in the army of the RCD rebellion to be of Hutu origin, the same as the governor himself.

The young recruits were trained at Mushaki, about 45 kms from Goma, by the Rwandan army, at a time when they were still officially present in Congo, and the different promotions graduating from this improvised Academy are estimated to be an army between 20 000 and 40 000 men. In an interview with Pole Institute two days after the withdrawal of the Rwandan army from Goma, the governor expressed his satisfaction in these terms: "I never stopped going out to the population to talk to them about their own security. Today, more than seven out of ten villages are protected by their own local defense force. We have also trained a good number of young men in the army. So we are in total control of the situation." Having said this, it is important to note that on the day of the interview, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2002, almost the entire territory of Walikale was outside the control of the governor, and inhabitants of Walikale Centre, of Hombo and Pinga, were on the move.

### **A power within a power**

When the Rwandan army was ordered to withdraw its troops from Congo, the governor of North Kivu was among the rare individuals in the territory under the control of RCD to have any military force under his authority and loyal to him. He was one step away from seizing the power that was within his grasp. Immediately after the departure of the last Rwandan contingents, Governor Serufuli proceeded to organise his men into 17 military battalions under the command of his own appointees. The military and political high command of the RCD had only the right to be informed. A power within a power had been created, the governor of North

Kivu is the *de facto* strong man of Goma, and he has the support of what is known locally as 'the governor's army'.

Logically, many observers were expecting the RCD Military Supreme Commander to react energetically, for example by the arrest of the military high command appointed by the governor of North Kivu. Good sense prevailed, and what could have degenerated into a confrontation between army factions, as had been the case for Kindu after the departure of the Rwandan allies, resolved itself as the RCD High Command living humbly in the shadow of a militarily powerful governor. In his interview on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2002, the governor insisted, however, "The RCD is there and will continue."

The question remained to know how the governorship of North Kivu could integrate the security forces economically. In the fiscal year 2003, the budget for the province was estimated at 7 million dollars, of which 3 885 546.16\$ were allocated for the functioning of the governor's office. The part allocated as a lump sum to the security forces is 1 796 007\$. One of the sources of revenue for the security forces of the province is the tax on the litre of fuel bought by the motorist of the town of Goma, which brings a regular income of 100 000\$ to 300 000\$ a month. Certainly, the needs for the reconstruction of the province are enormous and the governor's office and the Provincial Assembly request the retrocession of provincial receipts fixed at 40% should be raised to 60%. A meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2003 between the governor of North Kivu and the President of the RCD Goma on the division of the cake of para-fiscal revenue ended in great tension between the two men, and the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2003, the Governor showed his muscle by parading his troops through Goma. A clear signal that the teeth can bite.

### **A power that generates fear**

When the Pole Institute team asked how he hoped to instill confidence in the other ethnic groups that did not answer his call to send their children to the army, the governor answered: "We are in touch with all the communities here, they are reassured and there is no reason for them to be worried. The soldiers are there to protect everyone; they are the national military, and not an ethnic militia." (Interview of 7<sup>th</sup> October 2002)

On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2002, the President of the Nande community in Goma raised the alarm in a letter addressed to the Secretary General of the UNO in which he accused Governor Serufuli of preparing the extermination of the Nande people should he decide to "send his army mixed with the RPA to recover the territories of Beni and Lubero." This alarm created a controversy not only within the Nande community in Goma (letter of 25<sup>th</sup> December 2002; petition of 28<sup>th</sup> December 2002), but also a strong reaction from the chief Ndeze Paul of Rutshuru (letter of 29<sup>th</sup> December 2002). However, the content of this alarm was defended in its entirety by its author Maître Fataki Luhindi, during a meeting of all the communities of North Kivu called by the provincial Pacification and Concord Commission on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2003. During this meeting, after Fataki's defense, the Hutu and Tutsi communities, who were targeted by the accusations, were given the floor. The two communities, Hutu and Tutsi, brought up their complaints of massacres in the past, as far back as

1962, the year when the elected representatives of the Province of Beni, Masisi and Lubero decided to create the province of North Kivu, without the agreement of the representatives of Goma and Rutshuru. The meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> January 2003 ended with the creation of a commission to check the veracity of the different allegations from the distant and recent past of North Kivu.

### **A shady past that one would like to sweep under the carpet**

Until 1953, the demographic reports of the Belgian colonial administration included the Walikale region in the territory of Masisi. The surface area of Masisi (including Walikale) at that time was 25 517 kms<sup>2</sup>, and this territory was the least densely populated of all North Kivu: 7.77 to the km<sup>2</sup>. In 1954, the territory of Walikale became a separate political entity, with a surface area of 23 475kms<sup>2</sup> and the territory of Masisi was reduced to a surface area of 4400 kms<sup>2</sup>. The division of the indigenous population during the same year of 1954 was as follows: Goma 22 085 inhabitants; Beni: 140 260 inhabitants; Rutshuru: 125 618 inhabitants; Lubero: 230 117 inhabitants; Walikale: 53 097 inhabitants. The population density per km<sup>2</sup> in North Kivu was: Goma 30.17, Beni 18.39, Rutshuru 24.20, Masisi 37.86, Lubero 13, Walikale 2.26.

In the same year of 1954, the population of North Kivu saw an increase of 36 696 inhabitants. The annual report of 1954 notes: "In 1954, a further 2 653 Rwandan families immigrated into the province, bringing the total number of Rwandans who have settled to over 170 000." (Source R.A/AIMO 1953; R.A/AIMO 1954)

It is obvious from these reports that the most densely populated territories in 1954, in decreasing order, were Masisi, Goma and Rutshuru. These are the areas where traditionally the Congolese Banyarwanda had also settled, but who had received (with the exception of Goma) the largest part of the immigration organised by the MIB between 1937 and 1955. These concentrations of Rwandan populations in the territories of Masisi, Goma and Rutshuru were the deciding factor in the legislative elections of May 1960, and since then have been a cause for concern and frustration among the non-Rwandophone people.

It happened that in 1956, the territory of Masisi turned a significant corner politically. The indigenous circumscription (IC) of Gishari led by its first chief Joseph Bideri and officially recognised in 1940, (PV No. 93 of 30<sup>th</sup> September 1940) was coming to an end. During that year, its second chief, invested in 1944 to lead the IC of Gishari, Wilfrid Bucyanayandi, was condemned on 5<sup>th</sup> September 1956 before the High Court of Kivu to 39 months of penal servitude and a 300F fine for "arbitrary arrests and detentions, for exactions committed upon the indigenous people of his chiefdom and various other infractions". He was deposed on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 1957 after his sentence was passed. He was temporarily replaced by the territorial administrator, and on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1958, the IC of Gishari was attached to the IC of the Bahunde, at that time led by Bulenda Pierre. (Source: RA/AIMO 1956 and 1957).

It should be noted that the period between 1957 and 1958 corresponds to liberalisation and the creation of political parties, and the demographic weight of the Banyarwanda in North Kivu did not go unobserved. During the May 1959 session of

the Provincial Council, the Paramount Chief Kalinda asked the colonial authorities of Kivu not to give the immigrants the right to be elected by universal suffrage, and proposed instead that he should himself appoint Banyarwanda counselors, and that their number should be fewer than the Bahunde counselors. (Source: Dumon, GH, **The Belgo-Congolese Round Table**, January – February 1960, p. 153). From 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October 1959, Albert Kalinda, son of the Paramount Chief André Kalinda, visited the areas of Washali Bufuna, Washali Mukoto and Washali Kayembe, to make the traditional chiefs of these areas sign a document to be sent to the administrator, declaring that the Banyarwanda settled in the region did not have the right to vote at the forthcoming elections of May 1960 (letter of 29<sup>th</sup> October 1959). The three traditional chiefs of the Washali Bufuna, Washali Mukoto and Washali Kayembe refused to sign the document (unlike the Banyungu leaders), arguing that the Banyarwanda made up more than 80% of the total population of their circumscription, and that among them were certain people who had lived in the region for more than half a century. It is important to note here that up to the eve of independence, political arguments based on ethnicity did not hold sway in North Kivu. The administrative reaction was swift. The Legislative Decree No. 25/552 of 6<sup>th</sup> November 1959 recognised the right of the Banyarwanda to be electors, and to be eligible for election to the councils of the territory, the commune, the town and the province. Several Banyarwanda immigrants joined different political parties, but it is the CERE (African Meeting Forum), which benefited from their massive adhesion. At the legislative elections in May 1960, North Kivu obtained around 10 seats for the elected members of the House of Representatives.

The decision to create new political entities in 1962 was the apple of discord among the elected representatives of North Kivu. In fact, at the Leopoldville Round Table from 25<sup>th</sup> January to 16<sup>th</sup> February 1961, the possibility was accepted that a new territorial division could be made on a federal basis, keeping in mind ethnic identity, economic needs, the will of certain ethnic groups to live together, language and common history, and the minimum number of 300000 inhabitants. The conference of Tananarive from 8<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> March 1961 recognised in its resolution No. 1 the existence of the new States, and the conference of Coquilhatville of 24<sup>th</sup> April to 28<sup>th</sup> May 1961 provided for the division of the country into 19 new provinces. A merciless war had begun between the partisans of the united Congo, and the proponents of new confederated entities. A law fixing the criteria that should serve as the base for the creation of provinces was promulgated on 27<sup>th</sup> April 1962 by President Kasavubu.

Already on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1962, the elected representatives of the Nande, Hunde and Nyanga together signed a petition asking for the creation of the province of North Kivu without informing the representatives of the Hutu and Tutsi. The latter reacted by tabling a motion on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1962 to protest against the petition. According to Batibuka, it is from this time that “the elected representatives of the Nande, Hunde and Nyanga spread the rumour in Leopoldville that the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups did not want to belong to the Province of North Kivu, because they were motivated by the intention of separating from Congo and joining Rwanda. These same representatives provoked a censure motion against Marcel Bisukiro who was then Minister of External Commerce, accusing him of not being a Congolese national, of having tried to sell the Albert National Park, of being the owner of a print shop and



the Riviera Hotel in Bukavu, and of having set up an association with communist tendencies. The motion went further to propose that the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups should be deprived of their political rights, that the name of Bisukiro should be removed from the list of ministers, and that an enquiry should be made in Kivu concerning his commercial affairs." (Source: Batibuka, J., **Will Masisi remain in the North Kivu Province?** Bukavu, 1963; Ngirabatware, C., **Colonial heritage, history of the ethnic groups on the frontiers of Zaire: the case of the Hutu and Tutsi of Kivu from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century to 1972**; Parliamentary Chronicles, Chamber of Representatives, 13/4/1962, pp 6-8). It is important to note that arguments for exclusion based on ethnicity, and political soil as the favorite nursery of economic competition has been the heart of political discourse from the very beginning of an independednCongolese state.

It is in this tense and heavy context that the Province of North Kivu was created by the law of 14<sup>th</sup> August 1962. In the first article of this law, the territories of Rutshuru and Goma, still attached to Central Kivu, would proceed to a referendum. Kirotshe would become the capital of the new province, presided by Muley Bénézet, who died recently in Goma on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2002.

The year 1962 thus marked a sad turn on the road of the Province of North Kivu. It was during that year that political rivalry began to engender conflict on the basis of ethnicity, brandishing indigenous or foreign status as a criterion for inclusion or exclusion. It was during this same year that political massacres (opponents or supporters of the new province) began to acquire an ethnic character, especially since the opponents of the birth of a new province were for the most part the Banyarwanda, and its supporters were mostly Nande, Hunde and Nyanga.

The Banyarwanda have retained their collective memory of Lac Vert (near the locality of Mugunga, around 15 kms from Goma) as the place where many of them were assassinated and thrown into their grave. The war known as Kanyarwanda that broke out in the weeks following the creation of the new province claimed many victims, especially at Mutobo in the chiefdom of Bashali Kayembe. At the height of the Mulelist rebellion between 1963 and 1964, there was a manhunt throughout the territory of Masisi under the administration of Kakule Gustave, and many were killed. Mobutu's accession to power was greeted with relief in North Kivu by the population that had lived through three years of murderous violence. It was not until the 1990s that the wounds of the past were reopened. With the perspective of multiparty politics, the question of the nationality of the Banyarwanda of North Kivu came to light. Different ethnic cooperatives created their armed militia. In March 1993, ethnic clashes recommenced fiercely at Ntoto in the zone of Masisi. The arrival of the Rwandan refugees in 1994 complicated the local situation, and gave birth to two rebellions that are keeping the Democratic Republic of Congo in a state of continual war until today.

During the last ten years of ethnic clashes and two successive rebellions, all ethnic groups without exception have lost many lives, at the hands of the militias of one or other group, or the rebel armies or their allies. The collective memory of the Nande is haunted by the massacre of hundreds of people fleeing the AFDL forces in Autumn 1996, attributed to the Hutu militia. The Hutu mourn their people at Mugogo,

the Tutsi are far from forgetting the massacres of Mokoto, the Hunde count in their thousands the people killed since March 1993, and the list is long for each of the ethnic communities. Trying to rebuild the North Kivu without touching this painful past would be a trap. It is a duty to remember, and as soon as possible, not in order to avenge our dead, but so that the whole community can take possession of their common memory. A West African proverb tells us: "You cannot know where you are going without knowing where you come from."

The new power of the governor of North Kivu fits into the pattern of upheavals that are not always clearly defined. The Banyarwandan populations who have been kept at arm's length from local power, now consider that their demographic weight in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru and Goma should tip the balance of local power. For non Rwandaphone populations, the demographic weight of Banyarwanda in certain territories like Masisi implies the exclusion of the Hunde from the political competition, in the absence of a system that protects minorities. And for the Nande, setting up the territories of Beni and Lubero as an autonomous province makes the Nande living outside these two supposedly mono-ethnic territories very vulnerable. In this complex balancing game, we have to remember the heritage of the Mobutu era, from which Congo is finding it difficult to shake free, whereby access to political power means access to economic resources.

The way out of this political labyrinth of contradictory interests should start with security for people and their possessions. A security force made up mainly of Banyarwanda will find it difficult to gain the confidence of other ethnic groups, and in certain places, the local defense force cannot even reassure the Banyarwanda, considering the torture inflicted on certain of their brothers at Bunagana in January 2003, in the Jomba area, on the border with Uganda. Two victims died under torture.

In the present situation, and considering the uncertainty that reigns in this ongoing crisis in RDC, the attempts by one province to manage its own security is not a bad thing; but these forces must obey an institution and not an individual, and they must guarantee the rights and the obligations of everyone. Some people do not take the RCD seriously, in the light of their failure to mobilize the population behind them, despite the important place they hold in the inter Congolese negotiations. A case in point is the final signature of the inclusive agreement in Pretoria, when all the lights are red, and hostilities in the east of Congo are headline news; the governor's security forces will doubtless play an important role. One question remains, however: What is the future of North Kivu with a weak RCD with a reduced central command in Goma, and a local governor who is getting stronger, and can throw them out at any time? Are we watching a *de facto* decentralization, or separatist whims? Immediately after Congo's independence, the people of North Kivu were divided between the camps of the unionists and the federal separatists. Forty years later, the cards have changed hands, and all we can hope for is that the game of poker will do less harm to the populations, already traumatised and impoverished as they were in 1962 and the years that followed. Already, too much blood has flowed over these lava rocks.

Aloys Tegera March 2003

## South Kivu today: an attempt at contextual analysis

*Bernard Kitambala is a development worker in South Kivu. A member of Pole Institute living in Bukavu, he gives us here his reading of the situation of the populations of this part of the country.*

There is not much to choose between the precariousness of the tragic security situation in which the populations of South Kivu and Ituri live, apart from the cannibalism that has put Ituri in the headlines. Which ever way you look at it, the situation is worrying, and the problem is endemic.

At the time when foreign forces claim to have left the province, no patriotic inclination seems to motivate any of the different actors on the scene to fill the security vacuum created by this complex situation both harmoniously and collaboratively. The idea of collaboration (from its etymological root, true and noble in the Latin “cum laborare” = to work with, to work together) is even more distant, and remains just a pious wish, whereas it ought to have allowed us to join all our efforts, to control the situation through concerted work, work of the community, not disjointed efforts, whatever the evolution of the context might dictate. The negotiations going on in Nelson Mandela’s country for a new political order in Congo only appear to interest those who, curiously, instead of spilling their own blood for their fatherland, spill other people’s innocent blood, and now are spilling their saliva, fighting tooth and nail like predators, raising the stakes as high as possible, in order to receive the crown of glory prepared for them.

On the ground, however, particularly in South Kivu, the actors are slithering about in irresponsibility that they will bitterly regret in the end. And all of them - without exception – will be surprised when the new institutions of transition have been put in place, as we hope they will one day, that they will find on the ground the same lack of cohesion, and players of the same type. And this, let it be said, raises the unavoidable and thorny question of the managers and the management of the future of Congo as a nation state. In fact, even if the complimentary visiting card of the different actors in South Kivu (politico-military authorities of the rebel power in charge, civil society, and other fighting forces of the Mai Mai, Mudundu 40 and others commanded by Patrick Masunzu, Foka Mike ...) attributes to them the reputation and the strength of having not only a relative control over their environment but also a position of strength for lobbying, none of this unfortunately predisposes them to anticipate events. These actors, moving in a political environment that is both aggressive and complex, have for a long time indulged among themselves in raging and destructive rivalry. And this is at the root of the lamentable context in which the Congolese citizens of South Kivu are living, as regards security, politics, society, economy and culture.

### **Security of people and property in South Kivu: where we are now**

The war which has developed in South Kivu since 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1998 is far from over in fact, and far from making room for real peace in the hearts and minds of populations enjoying peace and reconciliation among themselves. In reality, all the populations

of South Kivu, including the town of Bukavu, live in a state of permanent insecurity, which everyone acknowledges at present.

The war between the troops of the Munyamulenge fighter Patrick Masunzi and those of the Rwandan Patriotic Army in the highlands of Fizi and Uvira territories has created a humanitarian catastrophe and massive displacements of populations, and those wounds will not heal easily. All the Congolese who fled Uvira for Burundi after the reconquest of the town by RCD troops supported by their Rwandan allies, are still hesitant to return to their country. The villages in the Ruzizi plain and Uvira territory are the arena of frequent kidnappings, armed attacks, thefts, rapes, taking of hostages, killings, burning of houses etc. And the scenario is practically the same in Fizi territory where these sporadic and untimely attacks are reported to be led by armed men in military uniform.

In the territories of Mwenga and Shabunda, there is desolation! The exactions of all armed groups of every tendency are beyond belief, played out against a backdrop of nameless misery. Hundreds of villages are literally empty of their inhabitants, and will probably never be rebuilt. These territories in South Kivu west of Bukavu, in the damp tropical jungle, barely accessible without air transport which is too expensive, are sparsely populated by a population reduced to extreme poverty by the war. This is a paradox, because at the same time there is a wealth of reserves of natural, economic and other resources, a wealth of biodiversity, yet these territories live the daily experience of violence in every shape, the barbarity of armed men, the deliberate asphyxiation decided by the hierarchy of the RCD who suspend flights, even humanitarian flights, into these territories, thereby stopping organisations from bringing assistance to the populations who are trapped there. And the consequences are obviously incalculable. The mining town of Kamituga, for example, outside the traditional administrative system, is near explosion. The town of Shabunda, capital of the territory of the same name, is a shadow of its former self.

In the collectivities of Burhinyi and Luhwindja, adjoining the territory of Mwenga, but culturally belonging to the territory of Walungu, the disaster reaches its height: interahamwe, Mudundu 40, Mai Mai and other armed bands are constantly confronting each other, and exchange like a ping pong ball the control of villages, looting, raping and forcing tens of thousands of people into mass exodus towards the town of Bukavu, where their survival is uncertain, since they do not have the humanitarian assistance necessary to shelter them from whatever will happen to them next.

As for the territories closer to Bukavu town, Walungu and Kabare, there is not a single day when at least two villages are not overrun by some or other armed bandits. These bandits loot, kill, rape, destroy and promise to return to wipe out any attempt at rebuilding life in the villages: this is true even for centres like Katana and Kalehe, on the road from Bukavu to Goma which is supposed to be made safe by the armed forces of the RCD (as they call themselves) or at Nyangezi and Nyatende on the road from Bukavu to Uvira, passing through Kamanyola, or at Kamitimbi or at Mugogo on the road from Bukavu to Walungu.

The territories of Kalehe and Idjwi are not left behind. Idjwi for example, although apparently safer than Kalehe, has seen sporadic incidents of insecurity, and is vulnerable to other disasters. Among the disasters that threaten this island territory, there is the high concentration of sulphur in the lake water that the people drink, landslides, earthquakes. The cases of insecurity that happen there are reportedly committed by the police or armed forces quartered there.

Apart from the earthquake of October 2002 which caused significant damage to people and property, whose epicenter was reportedly situated under Idjwi island, Kalehe territory is prey to chronic insecurity, and has many displaced people from remote villages and from the Nyiragongo eruption. The populations who are able to flee take refuge on the islands and peninsulas nearby.

The road from Bunyakiri to Hombo, strangely, is relatively calm, under the protection of the Mai Mai from the region itself, the forces of General Padiri, who manages this area without any rival, unenvied by the RCD forces since the withdrawal of Rwandan troops.

As for the town of Bukavu, capital of the province, and residence of the military, political and administrative authorities, it is not exempt from insecurity. Every week, there are reports here and there of notable insecurity, armed robbery, assassinations, intimidation! And even when some guilty people or suspects are apprehended, the people in charge organise a rapid pretend trial, and some weeks later, the same suspects or evil doers are as free as the wind, targeting those who had accused them or caught them in the act.

In short, the security scene on the whole is far from brilliant and this is a given. The multiple displacements of the population, the precarious hygiene conditions due to overcrowded camps and people on the move, the lack of medicines, the lack of work, the impossibility of cultivating fields in peace, an unbalanced diet, all these have made living conditions worse. The lack of security is a determining factor in the problem of rape and violence against women, and is itself a disaster on a huge scale, and the counseling and assistance to women who are victims do not correspond to the scale of the problem. The security challenges are obvious. They are the cause of:

- The large number of displaced people (more or less 150 000 internally displaced people) living in abject poverty without any outside help;
- Violations of human rights on a massive scale, assassinations, rape of women, sexual slavery, enrollment of child soldiers under military flags;
- Latent community and family conflicts which tear the province apart with rancor that is just waiting for the day of vengeance in a context where militia, mostly ethnic militia, are waiting in the bush.

### **On the political scene:**

All the people of South Kivu, innocent victims of this useless war with disastrous consequences, are waiting with impatience and hope for a speedy and happy end to the inter-Congolese talks which finally took place in the country of the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission", after the farcical outings to Gaborone and Addis Abeba.

They are placing all their future hopes on this colossally expensive dialogue, which will one day perhaps open the doors to peace, concord, reconciliation, democracy and development. Anyone with a little radio will follow with great attention its progress, and the positive results its negotiators achieve, often after a tug of war. They fear that these sessions might follow the same sad precedent of the Sovereign National Conference, which ended with that great national farce, the Supreme Council of the Republic, the Parliament of Transition (HCR/PT). They hope that the transition will be the opportunity to build the solid foundation of a true nation.

Community radios and private local radios (Radio Maendeleo, before it was shut down for the second time by the RCD, Radio Maria Malkia wa Amani, Radio Rehema) as for them, make an appreciable effort to broadcast, to the extent of their transmitters, the sparse news they can gather on the progress of the inter-Congolese discussions which are obviously moving towards a conclusion, and the setting up of the institutions of the transition. But what is the range of these broadcasts?

The efforts of these delegates to the inter Congolese dialogue who went off with such a fanfare have ground to a halt. Some of these "grass roots delegates" who were "speaking for their community" have gone off to settle in Kinshasa! Others have fallen between two stools. Still others among the chosen few who had to stay at the job, organise, when they have the time, meetings of actors, small meetings, *ad hoc* meetings, using out of date strategies; they are constantly in planes or boats going off to attend workshops, in the name of the grass roots communities; the feedback from these workshops, instead of dealing with the real problem of the moment with specific action plans that relate to the current situation, are more of the same old routine of the cooperative movement. No special effort can be observed to get information from the distant territorial base: this is not a major priority of the Coordination office, although some member associations do post broadsheets of national news in their courtyards...

The coordination office of the Civil Society of South Kivu, suffering today from the amputation of some of its hidden powerful members on the ground, is on its sickbed and in need of urgent help. Its mandate expired a long time ago, and many of the active members of the civil society are complaining. They complain of the fact that the team has lost its edge, but no one dares to organise elections either to reinforce the team in office, nor to replace the members who are no longer available, or even to install a completely new team... They wonder whether the people elected in 1997 are waiting for the war to end, or if they intend to remain on the throne like the rebel leaders. One thing is certain, whatever the cause: this uneasiness does not strengthen the civil society in general. On the contrary! In fact, have we not seen an ephemeral tendency, which fortunately in South Kivu, did not take long to appear, of the pernicious emergence of a new civil society, led by a gentleman, a certain local administrator, put in place by RCD, the rebel power, who knows perfectly well how it functions because he is also the leader of a local NGO? This society is certainly committed and dynamic, but it is weakened. For many of its high officials, there is nothing to choose between the belligerents, and the non-belligerent opposition parties who are jockeying for positions; the most recent Episcopal letter from the

Bishops of Congo denounce this as well. Its capacity for analysis and foresight is rather weak.

The rebel powers of RCD, as for them, have not seen the end of their troubles. On the eve of national reunification, the RCD has just appointed their third provincial governor, Xavier Chiribanya Chirimwami, someone pursued by the justice of Kinshasa, who replaces in this position M. Patient Mwendanga, whose reign of around six months changed nothing in the daily life of the Congolese of South Kivu, after three years and six months of the farcical reign of that folklore character known derogatorily among South Kivutians as PNKB (Papa Norbert Katintima Basengezi, an allusion to the National Park of Kahuzi-Biega). This is a power imposed in the usual way, taking unpopular decisions which set it first against business men (as was the case for the payment of taxes in dollars, license plates ...), next against the activists of the Civil Society (closing down Maendeleo Radio, expulsion of the late Bishop Emmanuel Kataliko), and at other times against the whole population by its bellicose declarations and its too obvious and unconditional attachment to the Kigali regime. The population believes, unshakeably, that the RCD does not rally the population, has nothing Congolese about it and above all is not democratic. The population is hostile to RCD and reproaches it with being nothing more than a sounding board of Kigali, with having made no difference. The population shouts loud and long that RCD is guilty of massacres, it is a corrupt movement which has facilitated the looting of natural resources by foreigners, that its high officials have enriched themselves while no public infrastructure has been rehabilitated, and its own soldiers and civil servants are unpaid. Instead of facilitating reconciliation and concord, the population reports that RCD is relying on ethnic and regional differences, and has even reinforced them. Every leader looks after people from his own constituency: the vice-governor in charge of finance and the economy, for example, Tommy Tambwe Rudima, coming from the Ruzizi plain, goes almost exclusively to the Ruzizi plain in Uvira territory, "to make people see reason". His colleague responsible for Administration and Social Affairs, M. Jean-Pierre Mazambi, as for him, native of Mwenga territory, goes regularly to Kamituga, to Kitutu, to Mwenga Town and Shabunda, because he is Murega... In short, what you hear from the population tends to demonise the power in place, accusing it openly of being the cause of the insecurity that plagues them. But beyond this description of the situation, underlying questions need to be asked: alongside which leaders, tomorrow after reunification, will the population be able to share in the effective management of the province of South Kivu? What strategies for participation are the Civil Society and the RCD putting in place, together or separately, to facilitate at the grass roots the building of a truly legal state that respects the law? It is obvious, as I said above, that this question does not interest the power in place; the civil society itself does not ask this question, except when they are asked to propose a name to occupy such or such a post. In any case, in none of the meetings that are held to talk about the future of the country, are delegates from the interior present! And among the 'delegates' present, the only concern is how to share out the cake, as if they were themselves the salvation of the whole population. This is true for the leaders of the RCD and it is equally true for the 'delegates of the civil society'.

Should we reproduce tomorrow, the same urban models of government and management, models which are beyond their expiry date? Should we be

represented by the same dinosaurs, of whatever origin, who insist on hanging on to power? Or should we turn completely, as reason dictates, to a new type of participatory management for a new Congolese society? No one has a monopoly of truth, nor of power. And so far, no concrete proposal for participatory management has been formulated by the citizens of Penekusu, of Bilalombili or Lueba themselves, for example, for the maintenance of peace, and for social cohesion in their environment. Nor has any local capacity for peacemaking been identified. This, however, would represent a way to legitimize the power that emerges from all the actors on the ground, and would be an experimental hub for starting down the road towards a new style of government. Unfortunately, no one insists on reminding people that everyone is the product of a community, a family and a constituency, so that the populations can be actors and not victims of a process.

### **On the socio-economic scene:**

Here, as elsewhere, warning lights are flashing. All socio-economic indicators are at their lowest level. Public infrastructure is destroyed: parishes, schools, hospitals, health centres are looted and wrecked; the tools of production are sacked...

Unemployment has reached exorbitant proportions. Villages do not have access to the most basic necessities. Villagers no longer have any clothes. Everywhere, even in places where there never used to be the slightest suspicion of it, malnutrition has set in... Childhood diseases (measles, bronchitis...) and epidemics (cholera, typhoid fever...) have become the daily lot of the population, which no longer has access to basic services. Poverty has pushed children into prostitution and enrollment in armed bands.

We have seen nameless misery. Rape has caused the break-up of many homes. The women who are victims of rape are isolated, sent away by their husbands, and find themselves in total destitution, without any help, delivering into the world children who are sick, children of bandits and unidentified attackers. Sexually transmitted diseases like HIV AIDS, gonorrhoea and syphilis, are spreading like wildfire... The descent into poverty, especially of women, has broken all records.

The spread of the 'child soldier' phenomenon (both girls and boys) and the sexual slavery of which women are the first victims has reached worrying proportions. Whenever the armed groups invade a village, they take away some girls and women, and they are ransomed after they have been infected with illnesses or after they are made pregnant against their will.

Access to clean drinking water is difficult because of the frequent movements of populations, and waterborne diseases are a threat to life. Many schools are closed and the drop-out rate can no longer be calculated, it has gone off the scale...

The survival of the populations during this crisis period depends on mining (gold, tantalite), but they are unable to make for themselves any real profit for themselves, because it is swallowed up in the exorbitant cost of the basic necessities that have to be flown in by plane.



## **On the cultural scene:**

However, even if we are not watching any spectacular progress in South Kivu, on the scale of the intercultural days of rapprochement and conviviality which Pole Institute organises annually in North Kivu, a timid mutual acceptance can be seen here and there. A coordination, created by the authorities, of the different tribal ethnic cooperatives does exist. The only thing is, it does not arise from the tribal communities themselves; it is rather a top-down structure. This coordination, led by a cunning Mobotist, who adapts easily to all the different regimes one after the other, has not yet proved its worth. It is to be hoped that the emerging tolerance can develop. Extremist discourse, which was supposed to be the characteristic of the people of South Kivu, has changed and is more accommodating when it takes into account the true interests of the community. This same discourse becomes more radical when in front of the authorities who acknowledge their helplessness and are incapable of guaranteeing the security of the people they claim to administer.

People from all communities have the courage to express themselves without complexes; and this represents a predisposition towards greater understanding, tolerance and commitment to a future, which everyone finds positive. This predisposition is the ideal open door for an intercultural carnival which will assure each community of the security expected of the other; it is collateral for building together a society where everyone has a place and where everyone is appreciated as he should be.

## **In conclusion:**

Every observer who is aware of the situation which is developing in South Kivu can see that all the conditions are met for the transition which Congolese most ardently desire to be another missed opportunity to begin rebuilding a state from the ground up. The lack of foresight is a deficiency which shames the sons and daughters of South Kivu. It is urgent and important that Congo should take control of itself and call on its leaders to avoid getting bogged down in the immediate, but rather to be profoundly interested in what is truly lasting. This approach requires abnegation, and perspicacity, vision and confidence in the future. Civil society must totally review its strategies if it hopes to play a leading role in this province, and continue to inspire confidence as it used to do, to develop strategies for the struggle which are appropriate for the present reality.

Bernard Kitambala  
Bukavu, February 2003

## Ituri: the war within a war

### 0. Introduction

*“Mambassa, epicenter of the exactions of the past month, is a ghost town. The elephant grass which has invaded the town centre tells the story of the drifting of a little agglomeration at the cross roads, on the edge of the great forest, whose gold and diamonds lit the fire of fever among the looters. The smashed doors of mud huts tell the story of the pillaging they have suffered over the past months, and fear, as in the surrounding bush, closes all mouths.”*

This description by Jean-Philippe Remy, which appeared in **Le Monde** newspaper on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2003, could apply equally well to all the rest of Ituri, in the North East of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It so happens that while every eye, nationally and internationally, is fixed on Pretoria IV, where the Senegalese mediator Moustafa Niasse attempts to convince the actors in the Congolese crisis to put into effect the power sharing agreement laboriously negotiated and signed in mid-December 2002, in Ituri there reigns a climate of tension, and all the parties in the conflict risk a confrontation there which would put a final stop to any hope of peace in Congo. Several armed groups and rebel movements face each other in this rich region on the border with Uganda, hoping to gain exclusive control, against a backdrop of inter-ethnic conflicts cleverly manipulated by the politico-economic mafia which has found an unhoped for terrain. As for the populations who are deprived of everything after nearly five years of violence that goes far beyond anything seen in the past, they live in fear, and they can no longer count on the hospitality of the neighbouring forest to escape the murderous folly of one or other group. Several analyses have been written on the subject of what everyone calls the tragedy of the Ituri. But most of them approach the subject from the “cultural” angle, highlighting the centuries old conflicts between Lendu farmers and Hema herdsmen, with other local communities counted insofar as they weigh in the balance of hatred of one or other side. Such an interpretation is dangerously reductionist, because it hides the political stakes in the drama of this region where positions on the future national playing field of the transition are seized by means of massacres, and the economic stakes which kindle such cupidity. These three dimensions are so intimately interlinked and the ideological discourse of the local actors is so stained by manipulation that we are often tempted to see only the cultural dimension, with politicians and armed bands serving Mafiosi economic interests giving themselves the beautiful title of ‘peacemakers’ trying to bring these enemy brothers back to reason. But this game of pyromaniac firefighters has gone on too long, and the alliances which are made and unmade on the western slopes of the Rwenzori have brought to light the true stakes of the game in which the Hema and the Lendu are only pawns in this murderous farce.

### 1. The cultural dimension: the Hema Lendu ethnic conflict

The Ituri region contained around 4 605 403 people in 2001 (there has been no serious census in Congo for many years) made up of Lendu, Hema, Alur, Bira, Nyari, Mambisa, Ndo-Okebo, Lugbara, Kakwa, Logo, Lese and Ngiti. The Ngiti, also known as Lendu-Bindi belong to the greater Lendu family which makes up almost half of the population of Ituri. As for the Mbuti, they lived practically on the edge of society, finding most of what they needed in the forest until the barbarity of MLC soldiers pushed them to the front of the stage, when politicians discovered in their misfortunes a way to settle their own scores.

The Lendu and the Hema are the most influential ethnic groups in the region. The Hema are subdivided into two groups: those from the south, often called Banyoro, and those of the north, the Gegere. Beside these indigenous ethnic groups, there are also other newly arrived communities, for example, there is a strong presence of Nande in the urban centres of Bunia and Mongbwalu.

The Lendu are traditionally considered to be sedentary agriculturalists, attached to the land, whereas the Hema are the cattle people, always searching for more space for their herds, and this is the motor behind their frequent migrations. The conflict between different traditions and different types of economy is as old as the world, and can sometimes be considered healthy. It is part of the dynamic of societies and always finds a solution in negotiation over conflicting interests, within the logic of win-win.

It so happened that in Ituri, as elsewhere in their colonies, Belgium institutionalized myths which, when often repeated, took root in the mentalities of the victims and the beneficiaries, creating social imbalances of which the consequences are seen to this day. "The first of these myths is intellectual superiority, efficiency. The Belgians believed that certain tribes were more intelligent than others," observes Colette Braekmann! Thus the Hema would be identified as more intelligent than their neighbours and would benefit from the many advantages attached to access to education. Closer to the whites, they would occupy posts desired by others, who with great reluctance gave in to this discrimination. Mobutu's regime did nothing to rectify this fatal error, and created its power base in the collaboration of the Hema elite.

Thus the Lendu, after so many years of swallowing frustration, think they have the right to make a bid for the power to decide, whereas the Hema want to hold on to their privilege. This squabble for power is firstly the business of the elites, not of the ordinary people, who here as elsewhere in this sub-region, are turned into pawns by an unscrupulous and illegitimate intelligentsia.

The Hema-Lendu conflict is not of recent origin. Already in 1911, the assassination of the Hema chief Bomera by the Lendu-Bindi in the present-day territory of Irumu unleashed confrontations which spread as far as Djugu territory. After independence, the violence between the two ethnic groups took on a political colour, and the Mobutu regime did not hesitate to shed blood to quell the disturbances. Thus in 1966, the Lendu revolted against the local administrative authorities, Hema in the majority. The repression organised by the provincial authority caused many civilian fatalities among the Lendu. In 1993, the Ngiti and Hema clashed again in

Irumu territory, with many casualties. Under the command of Colonel Ekutshu, the 412th battalion of Mont-Hawa reestablished order with heavy artillery: there were hundreds of Lendu victims.

But even at the nadir of Mobutu's regime, the conflicts between the two communities never reached such a level of horror and destruction as today. One even wonders if it will ever stop. Because, with this dance of alliances and political divorces, with the multiplicity of actors on the stage, we can see no one who can speak the magic word of peace.

## **2. The political dimension: the cycle of alliances**

At the time when the current hostilities broke out, in April 1999, the district of Ituri was under the administration of RCD-K-ML of Mbusa Nyamwisi, who set up his headquarters in Bunia, after throwing out the Professor Wamba dia Wamba, his former president of RCD, whom he accompanied when he left Goma to set himself up first in Kisangani. The battle for the control of Kisangani between the Rwandan and Ugandan armies chased the dissidents from Goma out of this town, which remained under the control of Goma and their Rwandan allies. Mbusa and his Ugandan ally settled in the rich Ituri district on the border with Uganda. The leader of MLC, Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, who had been unable to march on Mbandaka, dreamed of expansion towards the east, to get at the gold mines of Kilo Moto and the timber of the Ituri forest. He tried with force of arms, but following the advice of his Ugandan godfather, he ended up creating an alliance with the RCD-K-ML. This was the FLC (Congo Liberation Front) set up in July 2001. Thus we saw the head of the MLC/FLC leading consultations in Bunia with the traditional chiefs, hoping to reconcile the ethnic groups; we also saw him in Butembo asking forgiveness of the Congolese people for the wrongs done to them by politicians. But this harmony lasted as long as the alliance served his interests. At the inter-Congolese dialogue in Sun City on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2002, the MLC and the RCD-K-ML signed with the government of Kabila and some other elements an agreement which gave the man from Gbadolite the post of Prime Minister. This agreement signed in the wings of the inter Congolese dialogue was condemned by the large rebel movement supported by Rwanda, the RCD Goma, and they went off to ally themselves to other partisans of an inclusive agreement, in particular the old opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi of the UDPS, within the ASD (Alliance to Safeguard the Inter Congolese Dialogue). The agreement at Sun City would never be put into effect, but the RCD-K-ML opened its territory to the Kinshasa government. Kabila's ministers were welcomed in Ituri and North Kivu, air links were reestablished with the capital. Bemba saw this alliance between the government and RCD-K-ML as a 'dangerous relationship'. Bemba himself decided to make war on Mbusa and expel him from Ituri and even from his fiefdom of North Kivu. To do this, MLC allied itself with a little rebel movement, the RCD-National whose leader Roger Lumbala, another defector from RCD Goma, had set up his headquarters in Bafwasende, and controlled Isiro with its airport and Banalia with its diamond mines. In the meantime, another actor introduced himself onto the battlefield for the control of Ituri: Thomas Lubanga, a Hema, and former 'minister' of defense of RCD-K-ML. Sacked by Mbusa Nyamwisi, he refused to leave. On 17<sup>th</sup> June 2002, while he was away in Kampala, he was kidnapped and put into a plane with other Hema leaders and sent to Kinshasa...

Mbusa was suspected as the instigator of this kidnapping. The freedom of these leaders was negotiated in exchange for the Minister of Human Rights of Kinshasa, Ntumba Luaba, taken hostage in Ituri in July 2002. When he returned to Bunia, Thomas Lubanga created the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) and took up arms to chase out the RCD-K-ML, accused of stirring up ethnic conflicts and siding with the Lendu. So the UPC forces controlled several areas of Ituri, in particular the urban centres, but the people have paid a high price. Chased out of Ituri, RCD-K-ML was very close to losing Beni under the combined assault of MLC and RCD-N, when, under pressure from the international community, a cease-fire agreement was signed on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2002 between the principal protagonists of the Ituri conflict: Mbusa, Bemba and Lumbala.

But the most spectacular alliance, the one which risks to influence heavily the situation in Ituri is the one the UPC negotiated with RCD Goma on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2003. The presence of the government army in the zones of the RCD-K-ML in North Kivu can do nothing to reassure the Goma rebels, who see another military front opening up. The alliance UPC-RCD Goma exposes the far north of North Kivu to both lines of fire if open war breaks out. But it also puts their respective allies, Rwanda and Uganda, into contact. It so happens that the cohabitation between these neighbours is not always harmonious, especially as it concerns their handling of the Congo crisis. The armies of these two countries clashed three times in the martyr town of Kisangani, and three times Museveni and his generals were defeated. They remember the frustration of these confrontations on Congolese soil, the big brother being made to bow before the younger more pugnacious brother, and the sorrow of leaving behind on Congolese soil several young Hema officers, from Museveni's tribe,. It is obvious that the Ugandans are dreaming of a Sicilian-style vendetta. There are some hints of this already in the rapidly deteriorating relations between the two countries, despite the more moderate official discourse. On the one hand, the Ugandan press talks about the existence of a rebel movement, the PRA (People's Redemption Army) belonging to Colonel Bessigye, the disappointed candidate at the last presidential elections, assisted by Colonels Anthony Nyabakale and Samson Mande, natives of the Kabale region on the border with Rwanda. According to Kampala, the PRA rebels are assisted by Kigali, and they are organising themselves in the east of Congo. On the other hand, the day after the Dar es Salaam summit on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2003 between Museveni and Joseph Kabila, a new rebel movement was born in Kampala: the FIPI (Front for Integration and Peace in Ituri) led by Chief Kahwa, former minister of the UPC. Living in the halo of his status as a traditional Hema chief, he promises to scour his community to make war on his "brother" Thomas Lubanga, with the help of Uganda and the DRC. And on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2003, while the Congolese delegates signed the nth Pretoria agreement, the UPDF chased Lubanga and the UPC out of Bunia, where Chief Kahwa began to reign. Withdrawing as far as Fataki, the ally of RCD Goma ruminates on his defeat, prepares his revenge and strengthens his alliances. In this way then, any wise observer can see that all the ingredients are present for a new test of strength between Rwanda and Uganda played out by Congolese pawns.

In short, in Ituri, all the belligerent forces in DR Congo are in place: the government army through RCD-K-ML, the army of the MLC and RCD-N, the UPC, the Ugandan army supposed to leave once and for all on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003. If you add to this mix

the Lendu and Hema warriors, the cocktail is explosive. But what are all these people looking for in Ituri?

### **3. The economic dimension: murderous wealth**

The Ituri region remained closed in upon itself until the 1930s. Its luxuriant forest was almost untouched because of the low density of its indigenous and riverside populations, whose traditional lifestyle had a very low impact on the environment. So towards the 1930s, the colonialist tore the forest in two with a 600 kilometre long road, which will channel, in the 1960s, a mass of population in search of arable land and precious metals.

It is a fact that the Ituri region is bursting with immense natural resources. Among the most coveted is the timber, where anarchic exploitation is having a harmful ecological effect (according to some sources, the forest boundary is receding by one kilometer a year) but mostly they look for gold, diamonds, tantalite and oil which has been found in considerable quantities in the Semliki valley.

There exists in fact a complete network in the zones under Ugandan control for the sole purpose of exercising a monopoly over the principal local natural resources, the cross border traffic and fiscal revenues. The network includes high-ranking officers of the UPDF, business men and politicians and other rebel administrators. Among the most prominent officers in this network, the recent report by a group of UN experts on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth of the DR Congo (October 2002) names the retired army general Salim Saleh, half brother of Museveni, the Divisional General James Kazini, Colonels Noble Mayombo, Kahinda Otafire and Peter Karim. Among the private business men, the same source incriminates Sam Engola, Jacob Manu Soba and Manasse Savo, all of them Hema. The principal rebel members of this personal get-rich-quick network listed by the UN experts are in particular Wamba dia Wamba, Roger Lumbala, John Tibasima, Mbusa Nyamwisi, Thomas Lubanga, etc. The different militias and officers of the UPDF are used by the network as their executive force, delimiting territories and exploitation zones, while the rebel administration is a public sector front to siphon off tax money which is never used for public services.

Members of this network operate under the cover of fig leaf companies, among the most often mentioned are the Victoria Group, Trinity Investment, Conmet and Sagricof. It is useful to note that the network collaborates closely with the Victor Bout group of organised international crime. Mr Bout is the owner of Odessa, an air transport company based in Kampala, formerly Okapi Air, which shares planes and codes with Planet Air, the company owned by the wife of General Salim Saleh.

This is the key to unlock the drama of Ituri. The drama played out there is not a question of one community against another. There are individuals who are benefiting from these confrontations: arms dealers, the mafia networks exploiting precious metals who shrink at nothing to carve out their territory and keep it through a rule of terror, silencing anyone who works for or leans towards peace in this Wild West, where war lords, mafia lobbies and Ugandan army officers hold sway. ICRC volunteers have been massacred in the course of their humanitarian mission in

2001, and just recently, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2003, a MONUC helicopter with Mountaga Diallo, the Senegalese general commanding the UN force, was shot at over Bunia, where he was going to meet Thomas Lubanga to put an end to the hostilities which had flared up again fiercely in the area of Irumu-Komanda-Bogoro. MONUC immediately decided to suspend its flights to Bunia, and that would not displease certain people.

### **3. Conclusion**

In their report on the Hema-Lendu inter-ethnic conflict in the Djugu territory of Oriental Province, of 7<sup>th</sup> December 1999, ASADHO was right when they wrote: "It is political actors who by intention or by powerlessness are consistently at the origin of this implosion of interethnic violence, even if distant historical causes may sometimes be found." In the case of the Ituri, intention and powerlessness are combined, seeing the number of protagonists in this drama. At a time when delegates at Pretoria IV are getting bogged down once again in linguistic subtleties trying to arrive at a peace disagreement, prolonging the agony of the Congolese, at a time when these same delegates seize upon the Ituri as a reason not to make progress towards the drafting of an outline of a state worthy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, blood still flows in this martyred region. The predators, as for them, accustomed to the rule of the gun, continue to collect gold, diamonds and ivory. Because the ghost of King Leopold II still haunts the Congo. The Belgian king collected latex by amputating the hands of those who could not collect enough to satisfy the royal bulimia. With the funds generated by his company the EIC (Independent Congolese State), he built monuments in Brussels, the port of Antwerp, the Tervuren Museum where the most precious rare works of Congolese are collected. His policies have found imitators among the Congolese political class: the hunter-gatherer lifestyle has been transformed into an economic system, and violence has been transformed into a political system. As for the population, they reap almost no benefit from the collections that are going on around them. The solution to the problem of Ituri resides in the solution for the whole of the Congolese problem. This solution will be found firstly by pointing to the true actors on the scene in order to identify the real stakes. We are convinced that the Hema and the Lendu are not those most savage Congolese who continually attack each other because of a land dispute between Singa Kodjo and his Lendu neighbours in April 1999.

Onesphore Sematumba  
March 2003

## Interview with Dr Jo Kasereka Lusi

*Dr Kasereka Lusi is director of the DOCS clinic in Goma. He is also President of Pole Institute. He spent a good part of his earlier life at Nyankunde, in the Ituri region. Pole met him after a mission to this region which is today flowing with blood. His emotion is proportional to the tragedy. He later gave his analysis of the general context of DR Congo. The interview was recorded by Aloys Tegera.*

**Pole (P.):** You are coming back from Bunia, a region which has been sorely tried; you flew over Nyankunde, you went as far as Aru. Can you tell us what is happening there?

**Kasereka Lusi (K.L.):** Yes, I had the opportunity to use a MAF mission airplane which came specially in answer to our request. As no organisation, no group in the international community, is interested in the situation there, we, the Congolese, we have to go. Our brothers in Kinshasa sent us a plane to overfly the region and estimate the needs. We flew over Nyankunde. Not a thing was moving, we saw not one human being or animal; there were only trees and half-demolished houses. We chose to go and land at Aru to try and meet some brothers and find out what was going on. We found that indeed, people have gone back into prehistoric times there.

**P.:** What do you mean by prehistoric?

**K.L.:** It means that people are refusing to talk to one another; each ethnic group is closed in on itself, and anything that does not belong to the tribe is killed or destroyed. We are seeing inter-ethnic massacres! There are four ethnic groups in the region: The Northern Hema (Bagegera) and the Southern Hema are united against the Ngiti and the Lendu, who share one language. It is a catastrophe in the Ituri region which is home for several ethnic groups, but where those four have joined forces against each other.

**P.:** During the attack on Nyankunde, we were told there were many deaths among the Bira. How come the Bira are suddenly targets?

**K.L.:** I have no sure source to say the Bira were targeted.

**P.:** Can you estimate the number of deaths in these massacres?

**K.L.:** They counted 300 dead who were identified. But we are told of those who have disappeared, they are thought to be in prison. But as those who are in prison are Bagegere, no one believes that a Mugegere in a Ngiti prison can survive. Those who are dead and who have disappeared are over a thousand.

**P.:** And you personally, as the former Director of Nyankunde, what were your feelings as you flew over the region?

**K.L.:** Personally, seeing this region in ruins, I feel discouraged. It was in Ituri that I left the best of my youth; I wasted all my time to try to educate, to train, to work. My father also gave the best of himself. There are even some American missionaries who gave



their whole life to this place. When after all this effort, we see this catastrophe, this cataclysm, we can only say, "The world is wicked". For a whole population to bite the dust in this way, there had to be two things: bad leaders and bad doctrines.

**P.:** Do you see what is happening in Bunia as the summary of what is likely to happen in the other corners of Congo?

**K.L.:** I don't think so. I remember that the day our national hero Patrice Lumumba received the Charter of Independence from King Baudouin, the King said three times: "Lumumba, do not forget your brothers in Ituri." So now, when young men can kill an 80 year old woman who was looking after a missionary house, you have to say that is something other than anger. When they can burn alive a pastor who is preaching to them, that is something other than anger. The inhabitants of Ituri think that killing is a sign of civilization. And we are content to let them get on with it, sitting quietly in Goma or Beni or Butembo. We do not realize that these are our brothers and we must help them.

**P.:** Do you really believe that we have come to this because the people of Ituri have not been sufficiently helped?

**K.L.:** Help, that is a figure of speech. The real question is to know that we Congolese must be aware of our responsibility. People think that building a country means looking for stones to build houses. No. Building a country means identifying such weaknesses in every ethnic group and rising above ethnicity. Look at the case of Rwanda. There was genocide, but the Rwandans today are obliged to manage together the post-genocide.

**P.:** Now that you mention Rwanda, what is the result of the Rwandan military presence in Congo during almost six years?

**K.L.:** For me, I am happy to see the end of it, I am not interested in its beginning.

**P.:** What do you think of the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the allies of RCD from the East of the country?

**K.L.:** There is indeed a vacuum after the withdrawal of the Rwandans, but the Congolese must fill it.

**P.:** This does not alter the fact that in some corners, Pinga for example, there is great uncertainty.

**K.L.:** This is what I said to the political authorities. What man cannot defend his wife and children? Once someone says the Mai Mai are coming, they pack their bags and flee. But where can they go? Why can't the people of Goma defend Goma? Why can't the inhabitants of Pinga defend Pinga? For me, the question we must ask is, what we are doing to defend ourselves after the withdrawal of the Rwandans?

**P.:** What hope do you think there is that the Congolese will be able to organise themselves? What we are seeing is Mbusa Nyamwisi reigning in Beni-Butembo, Thomas Lubanga in Bunia, Roger Lumbala in Isiro, *et cetera*.

**K.L.:** This is totally absurd. But it proves to us Congolese that we have no true national leader. All those people have a fragmented vision of national politics.

**P.:** That's just it, we have always wanted a united Congo, and here the reality of the situation forces on us a crumbled, fragmented Congo. Will we accept this as the norm in the months to come?

**K.L.:** No, that can never be the norm. We lack good government.

**P.:** But how can we achieve good government with this policy of fragmentation?

**K.L.:** The greatest thing that God gave us in the previous century was the Berlin Conference in 1885. Why? Because that is where our present states originate. It's from that date that we talk about Congo, Rwanda, Burundi. If we question the boundaries inherited from Berlin, we open Pandora's box.

**P.:** Since you mention Berlin, let's talk about that. At Berlin, the Independent State of Congo was born, as the private property of King Leopold II. And I have the impression that we have never freed ourselves from Berlin, because after Leopold, Congo became the property of Belgium, afterwards of Mobutu and today it is the property of the warlords who are grabbing their share.

**K.L.:** You are right, Berlin drew our frontiers. If you are anxious about the warlords, it is relative to Berlin. We are invaded, in relation to Berlin. It's from that base that we can talk of Law; and from there, of development. Once the Congolese decide to say, "The holiday is over, now we get on with good government," then development will start within our national frontiers inherited from Berlin. But we are in a jigsaw puzzle, where one piece is missing, and that is the role of the Church, which is bursting with human resources. The church must show clearly its vision of society. Unfortunately, Cardinal Malula is dead ...

**P.:** It is not as easy as that, because the church also reflects all the contradictions of our society.

**K.L.:** Yes, but it is the only autonomous, structured organisation with a voice.

**P.:** Here you raise the question of method. How can we safeguard the legacy of Berlin, the great and splendid Congo?

**K.L.:** That's the right question. We need three things: firstly good government which will develop human resources and define priorities. The priority of priorities is education. Next comes health, and finally, the economy and decentralization with our borders.

**P.:** You talk about good government, but you need people capable of governing.

**K.L.:** That is why it's as though we are in a mixer; we don't know where we are. I sincerely think the answer will come through decentralization. As it is, everyone knows that our delegates to the multiple inter-Congolese dialogues are firstly there to buy jackets to store away their daily allowances, instead of thinking about what they can say for the Congo. We have to move beyond this stage.

**P.:** In the present context where the country is divided among warlords, talking about decentralisation makes people afraid; they see it tending towards the partition of the country.

**K.L.:** No, decentralization should not make us afraid. The fact is, that is the reality of what we are living. But we are not managing to put it into practice well. We continue to appoint our governors, vice-governors, instead of organising elections.

(Interview recorded by Aloys Tegera, Goma, December 2002)

## Interview with M. Faustin Buunda Ndyanabo

*The Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD Goma) has set up provincial assemblies that are supposed to control the executives of the provinces under its control. A year after the installation of the Provincial Assembly of North Kivu, Leopold and Onesphore from Pole Institute talked to its President, M. Buunda, in his office in Goma.*

**Pole (P.):** Please will you introduce yourself to those of our readers who do not know you.

**Faustin Buunda Ndyanabo (F.B.N.):** My name is Faustin Buunda Ndyanabo, I am President of the Provincial Assembly of North Kivu, since October 2001 until today. Before that, I was President of the Pacification and Concord Commission of North Kivu.

**P.:** You have been head of the Provincial Assembly for more than one year; what can we see that the populations have gained from this? What is the value added for the populations of North Kivu because of the existence of the Provincial Assembly?

**F.B.N.:** Firstly, I must tell you that the Provincial Assembly is still very young. We began by organising the structure of the cabinet. Then we drew up our Internal Rules, and then we organised the Budget Session for 2002 during the month of December 2001. It is the budget that we voted then that is still in application now. It is the first time that a province has functioned in this way, with a voted budget.

As value added for the population, the Provincial Assembly receives complaints from the population in every area, because as you know, the mission of the Provincial Assembly is to serve as a court of appeal. Thus, during its regular session, the Provincial Assembly adopted a certain number of motions in favour of the populations:

- 1) For its internal organisation, the Provincial Assembly drew up a code of parliamentary ethics which governs the behaviour of the honorable members.
- 2) In the political, administrative and judicial domains, the Provincial Assembly decided to create a joint commission which includes the judicial and penitential services and governor's office, with members of the Assembly, and civil and military security services. This commission is responsible for inspecting all the palces of detention and to inspect the conditions of detention of prisoners.
- 3) The Provincial Assembly also decided that the ONC (National Coffee Board) should be given back its building in town which was currently occupied by the security services (its plant had been destroyed by the lava flow on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2002). We decided also that the governor's office should return to the Association of Blood Donors of Goma (ADOSAGO) their minibus and motor bike.
- 4) In the social and cultural domain, the Provincial Assembly decided on the hours of opening and closing of bars. We also decided that the Primary Schools of Katale and Bubanga should be returned to State management because the Provincial Assembly saw that the Domaine de Katale company was not able to manage them. They decided to create a commission to draw up an inventory of State-owned land to reestablish the property rights of the State.

You will see that there is a wide variety of decisions, recommendations and wishes here, but not all the decisions have been executed by the provincial authorities. Three or four decisions have been executed.

**P.:** When the Provincial Assemblies were set up, some voices of public opinion said that this was really a Rwandan strategy to balkanise the Congo. What do you say to that?

**F.B.N.:** Firstly, I want to say that it is not the Rwandan allies who created the Provincial Assemblies. The Provincial Assemblies were set up by the RCD. In our province, the populations have usually organised themselves in cooperatives, in ethnic communities. We needed a structure which could reflect the entire ethnic configuration of the province. That is why the RCD, through its Department of Territorial Administration, Security and Information, set up these Provincial Assemblies.

**P.:** Can you tell us how you and your colleagues came to be put into the Provincial Assembly? Do you draw your legitimacy from the will of the people?

**F.B.N.:** We were appointed by Departmental Decree. But before this appointment, the RCD first organised consultations with the local communities, meaning the ethnic and tribal communities, but also with organisations and professional bodies. In our context of war and without any appropriate infrastructure, we could not organise elections. The Provincial Assembly of North Kivu is made up of representatives of all the people living in the province. This is the list of members. They come from every corner.

**P.:** Let's talk more about how the Provincial Assembly functions. We heard the governor of Kasai saying that the Provincial Assembly for his administration has never met because the members were scattered and they could never bring together more than four or five members at a time. What has been your experience?

**F.B.N.:** Our young Provincial Assembly has also faced some problems. They are mostly financial problems. Since the rebellion, in the whole of the east of the country, we have no central bank that can issue currency. So we use promissory notes (bonds) whereas the Provincial Assembly needs cash to function. There is also the problem of the ambition of certain members who are really looking for a political appointment. It is this problem of political appointment which created a crisis you know about, which has not yet been resolved. But apart from that, the Provincial assembly of North Kivu is functioning as it should.

**P.:** How do you relate to the Provincial Executive?

**F.B.N.:** Our relationship with the Provincial Executive is clearly defined. The Provincial Assembly depends upon the provincial budget for its running costs, and up to now, the province has done its best to ensure that we function.

**P.:** You who are supposed to be the eyes and ears of the population to control the executive. What exactly is your freedom of action since you are entirely dependent upon this executive?

**F.B.N.:** This is the same in every country of the world. The national assemblies, like the provincial assemblies, are dependent on the executives for their running costs, but that does not hamper their freedom of action. It is the same with the judiciary. The executive is obliged to give the judiciary and the legislative powers what they need to function, without infringing their freedom.

**P.:** What about the security of the population after the withdrawal of the Rwandan troops?

**F.B.N.:** Immediately after the withdrawal of the Rwandan allies, different armed bands tried to move into the positions formerly held by the Rwandans, in particular in Maniema and South Kivu. In North Kivu, many young men enrolled in the army and the Local Defense Units, so at the time of the withdrawal of the Rwandans, they were quickly put in place. The skirmishes observed in the regions of Pinga and Nyabyondo, et cetera, were quickly put down, but that has not been the case in South Kivu, where the town of Uvira was occupied for a whole week.

**P.:** You mention the recruitment of young men into the Local Defense Units and into the military to reduce the impact of the departure of the "Allies". The question is now to know how you expect to train and lead them, so they will not become another source of insecurity for the population.

**F.B.N.:** The management of these young men is not the responsibility of the Provincial Assembly. They answer to the Executive, that means, the province, the territories and the collectivities. The province is responsible for their logistics in collaboration with the military activity department and High Command of the ANC (National Congolese Army, military branch of the RCD).

**P.:** Do you not see a risk that these young men recruited by the Province, trained by the province and completely supported by the province, could see themselves more as a provincial North Kivu army and not a national army?

**F.B.N.:** The province has recruited them, provided for them materially and technically, but they are trained by the military High Command of the ANC. There are no military technicians in the Province.

**P.:** Let's talk now about the inter-Congolese negotiations which have started again in Pretoria. What concrete outcomes do you expect?

**F.B.N.:** I'm hoping for what every Congolese is expecting: peace. Congo is torn apart, reduced to small pieces; we no longer know what country we belong to. The population, in the east as in the west, hopes for peace to return. But peace can only come through those negotiations, because everyone who believed in a military logic has failed. But we must be very prudent, even when an agreement has been signed. Because signing is one thing, and applying the agreement in practice is quite another.

**P.:** With this view of events, can the population still live in hope? Because listening to you, I understand that some political actors are doing one thing publicly and at the same time doing just the opposite.

**F.B.N.:** The mission to bring peace to the country is a difficult task; one group, one person, cannot succeed alone. This requires the consensus of all the Congolese and even the neighbouring countries. That is why I call on all the political actors to think clearly, to show good faith, so that they do not plunge us again into war, as they did after the accession of Kabila Senior.

**P.:** With this war that started on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1998, we have observed that the Congolese have sliced up the country, and each group reigns over a portion of the national territory.

**F.B.N.:** Leading a country by slicing it up, that is probably not the solution. But we have to recognise that Congo is vast, there is no longer any infrastructure of communication, some corners are inaccessible. To take up this challenge quickly, we will need to install a significantly decentralized authority, to give great autonomy to the local entities, such as the provinces, for example. So that provincial governments have wide enough powers over the population they control. These provincial governments will take care of infrastructure, social affairs, and internal security. It is not possible, in the present context, to imagine that a Minister of Health sitting in Kinshasa would be able to remember that some population in a remote corner of Walikale could be in need of a dispensary, that the people of Kibati need clean drinking water, *et cetera*. But if, at the level of the Provincial Executive, there were a person in charge of social affairs, he would more easily solve these problems because he would be closer to the population. That is why many people judge that the third republic, beginning with the transitional government, should be federalist, to be closer to the people they govern.

**P.:** You have yourself said that the decay and breakdown of the country has gone very far; would not federalism be to the advantage of richer provinces, and to the detriment of poorer ones?

**F.B.N.:** Not at all, so long as in each federal system there is a policy of equalization which allows richer states to contribute to the development of poorer ones.

**P.:** The Luluabourg Constitution of 1964 proposed federalism. It was never applied. After the Sovereign National Conference of 1991, the idea resurfaced but was never applied. What makes you think that this is the right time for federalism?

**F.B.N.:** The application of the Luluabourg Constitution was blocked by Mobutu's coup d'état in November 1965; as for the SNC, it ended in a contradiction, for which the same Mobutu was responsible: he did everything he could to sabotage it. Today, I think the politicians will understand that it is in the best interests of the population.

(Interview recorded by Leopold Rutinirwa and Onesphore Sematumba.  
Goma, December 2002)

## No coltan - no cry?

The huge country in the heart of Africa called Democratic Republic of Congo, which once inspired Joseph Conrad to his novel "Heart of Darkness", has been a prime example of the so-called "Afrique des Comptoirs" for at least 150 years. Everybody helps themselves to the country's natural resources, from the colonial powers up to today's invited and uninvited African neighbours and friends. This system of plunder gains from the destabilisation or rather non-existence of Congolese structures and infrastructures and builds on a power vacuum. As the latest UN panel report of October 2002 shows, the plundering of resources is now carried out by all warring parties systematically, in form of organised "elite networks" with the involvement of Congolese politicians and businessmen on all sides, whose connections stretch to the international arms and drugs trade.<sup>1</sup>

In an internal report of September 2002, Oxfam International reached the same conclusions and pointed to a major difficulty:

*"The constant interaction between legal and illegal networks of exploitation means that most of these commodity chains actually transcend the concepts of legal and illegal activity. The exploitation of natural resources in the DRC is based on existing frameworks of the informal economy of the DRC, combined with national and transborder networks of private companies (mining, traders, investors), with the active collaboration of state actors profiting from the continuation of the conflict in the DRC."*<sup>2</sup>

Thus we are dealing with networks of exploitation straddling the boundaries of legality and illegality, in which, as the UN panel report says, multinational enterprises are directly involved, for example the German Bayer AG with its subsidiary firm H.C.Starck.

There can no longer be any doubt today that this form of resource exploitation is one of the major motors of the violent conflicts and wars which have continued in one form or another since 1993.<sup>3</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup> "Final report of the Panel of Experts on the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources and Other Forms of Wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo", Mahmoud Kassem, Jim Freedman, et al., New York, Oktober 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Peter R. Sampson, Internal Oxfam Report: War in the DRC: "The Continuation of Business by Other Means", Oxford, September 2002. The Belgian research institute IPIS reached a very similar conclusion in its last report on the war economy: „Network War. An Introduction to Congo's Privatized War Economy.“ Brussels, October 2002.

<sup>3</sup> See among others the two reports quoted before as well as the still unpublished report by the International Crisis Group (ICG): "Kivu, Scorched Earth: The Forgotten Crucible of the Congo Conflict", Nairobi, november 2002



conflicts and wars have plunged the majority of the Congolese population into increasing misery; they have sown or intensified discord and hate among peoples; and they threaten to block any future for the majority of Congo's youth outside mercenary activities, war and prostitution. According to a study of the US NGO IRC (International Relief Committee) of 2001, the war in Congo had by then already claimed around three million lives directly and indirectly - one reason being the lack of sanitary and social infrastructure.

Furthermore, the war must not be seen in isolation. It had a regional character from the beginning. There can be no peace in the Great Lakes region of Africa before Congo has found a settlement for its conflicts and basic problems. This has been clear for East Africa since 1996, but the connections of the parties involved with Angola, Congo-Brazzaville and even the most recent fighting in the Central African Republic have shown us to what extent the struggle for resources, especially oil, but also resources of high added value that can be easily smuggled, conditions war or peace.

Thus what is at stake is not an academic dispute about the cleanest and clearest form of advocacy in Europe. **At stake is the question how we, together with our African partners, can develop information and analysis around these complex connections and develop demands which can help to improve the social and economic condition of the majority of the Congolese people, to counter the risk of fragmentation of the Congo under the leadership of various local warlords with foreign godfathers, and to support the construction of legal institutions in order to allow for a lasting peace.**

Elections are not the way to achieve this on the basis of the current situation. And it cannot work as long as we perceive the Congolese population as helpless victims waiting to be saved by grown-ups in Europa. Even today, parts of Congolese civil society are encouraging this condescending attitude which is one of the legacies of colonialism and Mobutism.

### **The coltan story...**

In December 2000, at the height of the coltan (columbus tantalite) boom in Congo, the intercultural research institute "Pole Institute" in Goma (Kivu) together with the rural NGO coordination CREDAP (Comité de Réflexion sur le Développement Agro-Pastoral en Province du Nord-Kivu) began to look into the issue of coltan mining with the explicit aim of collecting and publicising the opinions of the local populations concerned. With the help of journalist Dominic Johnson of the Berlin newspaper Tageszeitung, the study was extended to cover the international dimension of the coltan trade.

The fieldwork was undertaken in several stages from December 2000 through to August 2001. It thus covered a period from the height of the coltan boom to a time of falling prices and fundamental changes in the structure of coltan trading. The traditionally agricultural Masisi area and the area around the coltan mines of Numbi were the main focus of the fieldwork. Interview partners were coltan miners, traditional chiefs, influential persons among big scale cattle herders, missionaries, school directors, farmers and small scale cattle herders, as well as women. As far as possible, the research also took the involvement of armed groups in artisanal coltan mining into account as well as the use of sales revenues on prolonging the crisis and the war in the DRC. Apart from the original French text, compiled in two parts, the study is now available in English and German.<sup>4</sup>

The "Introduction and Main Findings" of the English version says:

*"The study found that:*

- as crisis and war in North Kivu have severely hampered industrial mining, existing industrial mining concessions have been turned over to informal or artisanal mining, mainly of coltan. This phenomenon has led to a population exodus of all age groups with the aim of finding coltan;*
  - as a result, agricultural and pastoral activities are being abandoned in favour of coltan. There is a real danger of food insecurity in North Kivu if the agricultural populations continue to leave their fields in order to mine coltan or turn their fields into mines;*
  - young people, easily attracted by easy money, abandon school in favour of coltan mining. There is a risk that juvenile delinquency may develop, based on money and the AK-47;*
  - artisanal coltan mining does not offer security to those involved, who have no experience in the construction of underground galleries in order to protect them against regularly occurring landslides;*
  - the coltan export monopoly granted to the firm SOMIGL between November 2000 and April 2001 created conflicts, as miners felt cheated by price fixing contrary to the spirit of a liberal economy officially expounded by the RCD rebel movement which controls the region;*
  - unplanned coltan mining and export in a context of State collapse and prolonged crisis has been a source of wealth for a handful of businessmen working with old and new mineral trading networks in Eastern Congo, but it has also meant the emergence of a mafia economy organised around the rebel armies and their allies and the armed Mai-Mai groups.*
- Lobbying for a boycott or at least for a moratorium of coltan exports from the Congo has recently been presented as an easy solution to the*

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<sup>4</sup> „The coltan phenomenon: How a rare mineral has changed the life of the population of war-torn North Kivu province in the East of the Democratic Republic of Congo“, Goma, January 2002, available at Pole Institute Goma, e-mail:poleinst@compuserve.com

*problems associated with the international coltan trade. However, we think that if implemented this would only result in the concerned firms either continuing their activities, but in an even less transparent way, or simply moving to other locations to continue the coltan trade in the same or a similar way. The people of the Kivu would not gain, but would lose one of their very few remaining sources of income. The challenge is not to erase the Kivu from the coltan mining map, but to institute a fairer and less harmful way of mining and trading coltan.*

*The coltan trade is closely intertwined with the activities of all armed groups present in the area. No demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration programme can succeed without taking economic security into account. Proper regulation of mining and other trade is essential for disengagement and reconciliation programmes.*

*While the population of North Kivu ought to benefit from the coltan miracle in their province, food security must be assured and those involved in mining must be protected. North Kivu, rich in agricultural resources, must avoid the experiences of other parts of the Congo such as Kasai with diamonds and the Kilo-Moto region with gold. Therefore a promotion fund for agriculture should be created."*

Today it is apparent that this is no longer an isolated position, as the reports and suggestions of the UN Panel, ICG and Oxfam show.

First, however, **the current situation in the Congo** must be outlined briefly as the backdrop to the debate.

Unfortunately the Sun City peace process, in the Congo also called "Sans Suite"<sup>5</sup>, has confirmed pessimistic expectations. The war has reached a new dimension in spite of lots of peace negotiations and treaties. The surprisingly rapid withdrawal of Rwandan and Ugandan troops left behind a vacuum which various warlords are profiting from, supported by various Congolese and foreign parties. The alliances between armed and political groups are constantly shifting, the condition of the mass of the population is becoming increasingly unbearable in all parts of the country.

Despite a peace accord which looked good on paper and the nominal withdrawal of foreign troops, the Congo is in a state of collapse, with escalating conflict between different groups of Congolese and foreign soldiers and militias. Various Mai-Mai militias conquered the Congolese town of Uvira on the Burundian border at the beginning of October and retaken by RCD rebels with at least logistical support of the Rwandan and Burundian armies. When Rwandan Hutu militias in the FDLR attempted an uprising in the military base of Kamina and in an army base of the Congolese capital Kinshasa, they had to be put down with the help of the Angolan army. The Ugandan army remains present in Bunia in Ituri region North of Kivu with several thousand troops at the urgent request of the

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<sup>5</sup> french for „without result“

United Nations in order to guarantee some kind of security in an area which has been plunged into chaos by massacring ethnic militias. At the same time, the various militias from Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Sudan and Uganda have developed into a kind of "magma without frontiers" in Eastern Congo - divided among themselves, entering shifting alliances and attacking the home countries from neighbouring states. Thus it is misleading to talk of a withdrawal of foreign forces from the Congo. What we have is a **regionalisation of the conflict together with further fragmentation.**

A forthcoming report on the situation in Kivu by the International Crisis Group<sup>6</sup> says: "**We can't go back to the way things were before coltan**". It continues:

*"While the boom in artisanal mineral production in the Kivus in the last few years has undoubtedly had some very deleterious consequences - for food security, for the environment, for rural dollarisation, for overall security and the financing of a ruinous war<sup>7</sup> - the international clamour for a boycott on mineral production misdiagnoses the costs. For all its attendant problems, mineral production has become the only available strategy of economic survival for many Kivutiens. Across the Kivus, coping strategies have been pared to the bone. So marginal have people's economic means become that an entire stratum of micro-intermediaries has generated itself: individuals purchasing 5 Kg of manioc flour and reselling in units of a couple of hundred grams, for example, for marginal profit, or reselling petrol in sub-units of a litre. Violence (and the rumour of impending violence) have taken entire areas of former agricultural activity completely out of production, producing both rural unemployment and rapidly mounting produce prices. Over the first two years of the war - that is from the end of 1998 to the beginning of 2001 - the price of manioc (a basic staple) rose by over 9,000 % in urban and rural markets in North Kivu in local currency terms.<sup>8</sup> But even calculated in dollar terms, the price rose by a factor of between 3 and 4, and rose most sharply in the rural areas. The enormous economic decline has been sharply accelerated by the present war, but it did not begin there. It is the outcome of the decade of violence and instability that the Kivus have known. From an agricultural point of view in North Kivu, it certainly began with the wholesale destruction of the several hundred thousand head of cattle between 1993 and 1996. While the economic casualties*

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<sup>6</sup> ICG Report November 2002, p. 29ff.

<sup>7</sup> See Aloys Tegera, "Situation actuelle au Nord-Kivu (Juin 2001)", *Obsac*, Vol. 4, n°27, 2-8 juillet 2001 ; and for an excellent overview of the multidimensional sources of conflict in North Kivu: *Obsac*, "Les multiples dimensions des conflits ethniques dans l'est de la RDC: une synthèse des principaux facteurs dans le Nord-Kivu", Vol. 5, n°8, 18-24 février 2002, [www.obsac.com](http://www.obsac.com)

<sup>8</sup> Price data from FAO, Goma analysed by ICG.

included some of the major economic godfathers of the Mobutu era, they also included many small producers too: 'We can't go back to the way things were before coltan, because before, we used to have cows and goats, but since the war there have been none. Each family here used to have maybe 15 cows, now there are none any more'.<sup>9</sup> With the collapse of the international tantalum price, some of the youths involved in digging have returned to agricultural production, particularly as some areas of the Masisi have known incremental improvements in security over the last six months to a year. Others, as already discussed, have joined up with existing militias or formed their own. Still others, who managed to get out before the market fall took their savings with them, have decamped to urban centres and set up in petty commerce of various kinds. But a final group continue in the mineral sector, attempting to exploit other commodities: cassiterite (tin ore), a long-time Kivutien product; wolfram (tungsten); gold (the subject of almost uncontrollable smuggling from eastern Congo) and so on. Whilst all of these - and the coltan which is still produced in large quantity - have an intimate linkage with the continuation of violence in the Kivus, to attempt international boycotts would be impracticable (because of the diffuse nature of the commodity chains involved and the impossibility of accurately determining the minerals' provenance once they reach the international market) an irresponsible (because of the consequences for local survival strategies). Instead, the international community should be applying pressure for mineral exploitation to take place within a framework of responsible economic governance as soon as possible. The future of the Congolese economic patrimony needs to be addressed explicitly as part of any future negotiations deriving from the Lusaka process (or its possible successors). It is irresponsible to assume that the economic governance will simply emerge as a product of some new Congolese political dispensation, particularly as for geographical and logistical reasons, the economic development of the Kivus will inevitably involve cooperation and commercial integration with neighbours who are currently enemies."

Oxfam International reaches similar conclusions:

"Long-term peace-building efforts must integrate the question of resource exploitation. Sustainable and equitable use and management of resources is critical to stability for all countries in the region. There is an urgent need to discuss the unspoken-cooperative mechanisms of management of resources by the different countries in the Great Lakes Region. The goal is to make the "peace dividend" more advantageous than the "war dividend." Criminal networks of resource exploitation will be the most dangerous spoiler to this peace process. The condition sine qua non for this to happen is a functioning legal and administrative framework to manage Congolese resources. In

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<sup>9</sup> ICG interview with chief of localité near Kichanga, April 17, 2002.

*addition, international frameworks and compliance mechanisms will be necessary in order to break the link between criminal networks and the economic exploitation of resources in the DRC.*<sup>10</sup>

And finally the UN Panel comes down clearly against a boycott in its recommendations, while pushing for punitive action against the criminal networks. Naming and shaming has already had an effect on the international arena in connection with the UN Panel report on the Congo.<sup>11</sup>

*"155. An embargo or a moratorium banning the export of raw materials originating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo does not seem to be a viable means of helping to improve the situation of the country's Government, citizens or natural environment. Massive technical and financial assistance for the population would be required to offset the humanitarian impact of such restrictive measures. At the same time, if the Panel in its report does not recommend any punitive measures to curb the illegal exploitation and trade originating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, this will only encourage a continuation of the exploitation by different criminal organizations. This could easily lead to an increase in these activities. There must be sustained efforts to deter illicit and illegal exploitation.*

*156. Restrictive measures nevertheless need to be taken vis-à-vis the role of companies and individuals involved in arms supply and resource plundering. The international and multinational dimension of these illegal activities is very important. Ethical and transparent business practices are needed to combat these illegal activities.*

...

*158. In order to readjust the present process of illegal exploitation and encourage legal exploitation, which could contribute to the economic stability of all parties, there is a need to apply forceful disincentives and incentives. These should be monitored through a proactive monitoring body. Until now, all the parties involved in the illegal exploitation have had no strong incentive to alter the economic status quo. It is necessary, therefore, to find measures that address their fears of losing revenues. Such measures will however be effective only if a political process is undertaken simultaneously.*

*159. Reconstructing and reorienting the region's economies are essential to peacemaking and peace-building. The Panel believes that a peace dividend in the form of economic incentives should be emphasized by the international community in order to promote the parties' adherence to the peace agreements and encourage confidence-building. The Panel also proposes in its recommendations that a set of disincentives be enacted to apply pressure in the case of non-compliance with the agreements."*

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<sup>10</sup> Peter R. Sampson, *ibidem*

<sup>11</sup> See for instance the declaration of the religious leaders of the DRC from November 2002, the defensive statements of Rwandan and Ugandan leaders in different interviews, the attempts of Joseph Kabila to get rid of the ministers and heads of state enterprises quoted in the report.

As the way to achieve this, the Panel recommends an international conference:

*"160. Many of the Panel's conclusions about the economic roots and consequences of the conflict have been echoed in ideas associated with the proposals for an international conference on peace, security, democracy and sustainable development in the Great Lakes region. Recently signed agreements may signal that the time for organizing this conference is approaching. Such a conference would be an ideal forum to address the need to reorient the regional trading system to post-conflict imperatives and for negotiating the framework of a multilateral agreement to carry this out. This reorientation will require providing the incentives and means to promote regional economic integration, which would marginalize criminal and military-driven trade in favour of legitimate commercial development that is transparent and growth-oriented. Supporting regional economic integration could help to gradually draw the countries involved in the conflict closer and act as a barrier to future outbreaks of armed conflict."*

All these texts assume that the rule of law and good governance are preconditions for lasting peace. Yet these can only be developed when the social and economic condition of the population improves. So how can this circle be squared?

### **The Congolese people are not primarily victims, they have mostly taken their destiny into their own hands....**

Since 1990, if not before, Congo's population has had to take care of social, cultural and economic services which are usually the job of government. Some examples from Kivu:

- parents are paying for schools as these have not been able to pay teachers' salaries for decades
- religious and communal networks run a basic health service
- when the Nyiragongo volcano erupted in January 2002, destroying 40 percent of Goma and 85 percent of its business potential, civil society groups organised initial emergency aid which forced the international community to act five days later
- Goma now has around 500.000 inhabitants of which 5.000 at most receive a salary and 5.000 more are members of micro-credit schemes. How do the other 490.000 survive? Surprisingly no-one starves to death in the streets of Goma although the situation of many people is difficult. What coping strategies have people developed in an environment characterised by war and uncertainty?<sup>12</sup>
- the artisans' association APIBA in Goma, supported by the German Protestant Development Services (EED), continues to function despite the

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<sup>12</sup> See also: Pole Institute, *Atelier autour des micro-crédits dans un contexte de crise prolongée*, Goma, August 2002, and Pole Institute, *Micro-credit experiences in Goma and rural areas of Masisi and Rutshuru (Northern Kivu, RDCongo)*, Juli 2002.

destruction of infrastructure by war and natural disasters.

Everyone who works in Congo knows that these are just a few examples for the amazing capacity of the Congolese population to adapt to adverse circumstances, to survive and work creatively. They are hindered in this by warlords who manipulate conflicts and tension and by the legacy of infantilisation left by missionary work, colonialism and Mobutism. This is reflected even in churches and civil society groups among which divisions, conflicts and tensions mirror those of the whole society. Another problem is the unsolved land question and the problem of overpopulation in some regions. Unsolved questions of nationality, one of the catalysts of the 1996 war in Kivu, arose because of political manipulation by Mobutu, when he removed citizenship from the Rwandophones, some of whom had been born in Congo and lived there for generations, and thus created conflict between different groups in order to hold on to power. This conflict is still not resolved.

The ICG report says about this:

*"While jockeying for positions and continuing their different wars in the context of the Intercongolese Dialogue, Kivutien leaders and other Congolese have only manipulated the underlying explosive Kivutien unholy trinity "Nationality, Land and Ethnicity" to make political mileage. Similarly, MONUC and the UN panel on exploitation of natural resources have proved totally inadequate to contribute to conflict resolution in Eastern Congo. More than anything else, the Kivus are now paying the price of forty years of Mobutist bad governance that led to the collapse of the State, and ultimately to the war. Unless action is urgently taken to reconstruct the Congolese State and guarantee a minimum of good governance in the management of the Congolese affairs, nationality, ethnicity and land will continue to be manipulated and will dog the situation after any eventual national/regional peace deal is obtained".*

The immense majority of the Congolese population is tired of war and no longer trusts politicians. However, they can easily be manipulated against one another. Division, hate and internal conflicts are the worst enemies of peace-building. When you work with Congolese partners, you must take this into account and try to reduce such conflicts instead of exacerbating them by unreflected comments, spreading rumours and even placing your colleagues on one side or the other.

Coltan is not the only example for the link between resource plunder, manipulation of groups and power politics. When in the summer of 2002, Pole Institute was informed through an article<sup>13</sup> by Dominic Johnson of the exclusive oil exploitation contract between the Kabila government and the mercenary oil firm Heritage Oil, which turned 30.000 square kilometres in North Kivu in Ituri into a contested area and had already led to Ugandan and Rwandan military movements, the Institute made

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<sup>13</sup> Die Tageszeitung, Berlin, 18/6/2002  
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contact with the multi-ethnic elders' council of North Kivu, informed the representatives of the various ethnic groups about the situation and discussed the danger of conflict manipulation with them. More information must now be collected, analysed together with the people concerned, and the fragmentation of social groups must be countered.

Unfortunately, even international agreements such as the recent Interlaken accord of the diamond industry cannot solve the problem completely. On 5 November 2002, Dominic Johnson commented in the "Tageszeitung":

*"The diamond industry has given itself an ambitious system of auto-regulation. Anyone who offers diamonds for sale without being able to guarantee their provenance from a source which does not "finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments as described in relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions" may no longer participate in the legal diamond trade. It is the first universally applicable system of rules after years of debate on the connection between trade in natural resources and African conflicts. It is no coincidence that the new system is coming into existence at the same time as a fundamental debate is beginning on UN level, reaching much further than the diamond trade. The findings of a UN Panel on the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the DR Congo, released two weeks ago, are due to be debated in the UN Security Council this week, and possible measures against those involved are under discussion - besides military leaders of the warring countries these include private companies from all over the world who trade or process diamonds, gold, coltan, tropical hardwoods and other riches of the Congo. The UN Panel spoke of an "elite criminal network". This goes much further than the question whether a warlord is buying arms for his militiamen with the proceeds from diamond sales. At stake are the rules governing the activity of foreign companies in a war zone. Such rules used to be discussed solely in the context of environmental and social standards - the case of Congo now concerns the political consequences of entrepreneurial activity. Without the debate on conflict diamonds, this discussion would not be possible. Private companies must recognise that their activities have political and social consequences. But it is wrong to regard this simply from a point of view of condemnation. An oil firm can be held responsible for the pollution of its production area, but not a mineral trader for the political sympathies of his suppliers. Without foreign capital, the reconstruction of the Congo and other crisis regions is impossible - and if you want investments in such areas, you can hardly call already active firms profiteers. Policymaking should not condemn such firms but include them in a long-term development perspective."*

Martin Dietz, aid worker for the German NGO "Deutsche Welthungerhilfe" in Congo, wrote in response:

*"Once again you are correctly pointing out that boycott of non-certified diamonds cannot be the answer. Warring governments can issue*

*certificates too. Dominic Johnson mentions the Congo, where the official Kabila governments and its ally Zimbabwe are financing their war with the proceeds of state mineral sales, while the Rwandan and Ugandan puppet governments in the East issue export licences to allow warlords to finance personal wars and enrich themselves.*

*The latest Un Panel report on the exploitation of the Congo does not only name the firms involved but also lists almost all Congolese "political" agents as members of the network of profiteers. While those on the "government" side will continue to concentrate on personal gain, the country and its impoverished population urgently needs the earnings from mainly artisanal mining.*

*If there is no taxation system on a national level which orientates revenue responsibly towards the common good, the UN, instead of prohibitive measures, should set up a development fund for exporting countries which allows private initiative to invest in business and pay taxes for the common good. Private Congolese traders in Butembo (Eastern Congo) are currently investing in an airport and several small-scale hydro-electric power stations. This encouraging initiative should be supported and not undermined by a short-sighted boycott."*

As for myself, I do not have an easy answer. Pole Institute has suggested a Fund for Social and Economic Development for North and South Kivu, to be financed by coltan earnings. The question remains who should run such a fund: the representatives of the RCD are certainly not suitable, and neither are the governors of the two provinces - one is turning into a warlord with his own army, the other is fluctuating between alliance with Rwanda and his own mono-ethnic Mai-Mai clientele. The Kabila government has neither the legitimacy nor the capacity to administer such a fund from 2000 kilometres away. Civil society is divided and in a process of restructuring. The multi-ethnic elders' council in North Kivu is highly regarded but would probably be overwhelmed by such a task, although it, as well as some other generally respected institutions as the school coordinations of the different churches, could probably participate in the constitution of a plurilateral coordination mechanism. There is no easy answer, but a solution might be found in dialogue with the various civil forces and their representatives.

The situation is complicated, but the following points are vital from my point of view:

- long-term solutions can only be reached together with the people affected
- issues of resource exploitation and possible suggestions for dealing with it must be discussed with partners on the ground, with a view to developing demands which can then be fed into international advocacy
- information and analysis emanating from the field should be taken seriously instead of us hearing only what suits our point of view
- we should be **for something, not against somebody**. Only then can we hope to overcome the fragmentation of Congolese society.
- negotiation and dialogue with firms involved should be sought on that

basis; there is no need to fear contamination, especially if it is widely publicised and gathers momentum.

- the situation in Africa must be kept on the agenda of the international development debate.

On the occasion of a Round Table to Burundi at the German Ministry for Co-operation in October 2002, I suggested some criteria for this last point.

*"A central problem is the representativeness and legitimacy of all kinds of modern and "traditional" representatives. Even NGOs and churches do not automatically represent the people in whose name they are active. In such a situation, development co-operation can take place with state and non-state actors. But any kind of co-operation may exacerbate conflict instead of reducing it, if it does not adhere to the following criteria:*

- continuous monitoring of the situation and the various developments on the ground is needed, taking care to distinguish between words and deeds*
- the main focus of co-operation must be to strengthen and professionalise local initiatives and structures in the non-state and state sectors which contribute to peace-building in the widest sense*
- this means reinforcing civil structures against those who rely on the force of arms in settling conflicts of interest*
- when deciding on partners and measures, it should be checked whether they unite or divide, build bridges or exclusion - this is the "Do No Harm" approach*
- contacts among the partners themselves in order to cover the widest possible field help to build networks and alliances*
- donor representatives must not take sides but claim a clear position: for peace, against the culture of violence. They want a sustainable improvement on the condition of the population, as far as possible transparent processes of legitimacy and representation, the development of modern and simultaneously adapted structures of citizens' agency which might be piloted decentrally first. The only sustainable yardstick for development work is whether the "target population" appropriates it for itself".*

There is a lot of work ahead. Let's not waste time!

*by Christiane Kayser*

*November 2002*

## Beyond War In The Congo: How to develop strategies of reconstruction from the experience of disintegration

It is difficult to talk about the Congo in a way that adequately conveys the experiences of its people and the magnitude of their suffering in a war which has cost more lives since it began in 1998 than all other wars of the planet in the same period put together. When I was in Bukavu recently I met a student at the Catholic university, Marie. I asked her the way; she said that she didn't know because she wasn't from here, she was from Shabunda, a town in the jungle 100 miles further West, isolated by war for years. She told me her story: how militias had attacked the town, how she and her mother had been abducted into the forest by militia fighters and kept as hostages and abused for months until she was able to buy her freedom - she did not say how - and leave. She went to Bukavu to find her sister aged 9 who had made her own way into the city. Bukavu, a city of 500.000 people, many of them internally displaced, was safety for her, but she was now completely cut off from her home town. She doesn't know what has happened to her mother who didn't even have any clothes left when she had to leave her behind.

Marie told me this story in fewer words than I have used now, in a laconic, matter-of-fact way which showed more strongly than words how this experience had affected her. It was her horizon, it was something perfectly ordinary by the standards of the world around her which she could not escape. She would never be able to surmount this horizon, nor would she ever be able to go back to the world she knew before.

20 million people live in Eastern Congo. Of these, according to surveys by a US organisation close to three million have died from the consequences of war since 1998, most of them because of the spread of disease and famine and the collapse of basic services. Hardly anyone has any income or access to services of any kind. The region is divided between warlords who carve out territories for themselves in order to be players in the grander game of Congolese power politics. The Congo is divided into spheres of influence of various political leaders: the Kabila government in the West and South, including the richest mining areas in Kasai and Katanga; the RCD rebel movement in the East; the MLC rebel movement in the North; a host of smaller groupings in the North-East and a plethora of local militias groupings in the forests of the East who challenge all warlords' authority.

The disappearance of the Congo as a recognisable political entity is the sorry conclusion of decades of reverse development. When the Congo became independent in 1960, its annual per capita income was that of a rich developing nation on the verge of industrialisation, around 2000 US

dollars in today's terms. In the mid-Eighties, when Mobutu had already instituted his system of plunder and pillage, this had dropped to a third, around 700 dollars, and Zaireans were already talking about the terminal crisis of their country and the urgent need for change. Over the next ten years, Mobutu had to abandon one-party rule and allow a semblance of democratic debate, while the economy went unreformed, and by the time he was forced from power by an ad hoc assembly of rebels and foreign armies under the leadership of Laurent Kabila 1997, per capita income had again dropped to a third of the Eighties level, around 200 dollars. At that time the Democratic Republic of Congo, as Kabila renamed the country, was seen as an economic ruin in urgent need of reconstruction on every level. But instead there followed war, and today per capita income is again only a third of the level of five years ago, around 70 dollars, meaning that a large proportion of the 50 million population of the country has no income at all and is living - or dying - in the most abject misery. These figures give an indication of the enormity of the country's decline and the seemingly impossible task before anyone who attempts to bring peace and development to the Congo today.

The political tensions which fuel foreign involvement in the Congo are older than the war itself. Since colonial times, the country has always been an object of desire for anyone looking for easy profits or quick influence in Africa. Mobutu used Zaire to destabilise neighbouring countries, especially by harbouring Rwandan Hutu militia left over from the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and also the Unita rebels of Angola. When these neighbouring countries were fed up with this, they teamed up and swept Mobutu from power, in a grandiose campaign using Rwandan and Ugandan infantry, Angolan logistics and weaponry and Zimbabwean finances. Kabila, up to then a joke figure in the Zairean left and regarded more as a shady dealer than a serious politician, was installed as president in Kinshasa, but the overdue debate on how to create a viable state in the territory of Congo-Zaire after decades of misrule did not take place. Kabila decided that he was in power now and that was it, there was nothing more to discuss. Naturally this caused resentment, and when a year later he turned against some of his foreign backers, disillusioned former followers formed a new rebel alliance with sections of the army under Rwandan command who seized control of the garrison towns of the East, starting the new war which has continued to this day.

The numerous peace processes which have followed one another since the Lusaka Agreement of 1999, right up to the ongoing discussions in South Africa, have failed to make any difference to this. Not even the withdrawal of most foreign armies from the Congo in the summer of this year in accordance with UN resolutions has brought peace. Contrary to the widespread Congolese belief that foreign interference lies at the basis of the country's woes, the crisis is home-grown and continues even without direct foreign backing. Given the total collapse of the Congolese economy, all warring parties are reduced to a predator

economy, selling the natural resources under their control to anyone who can offer them weapons and other goods in return.

In this they perpetuate a development model - if such it can be called - instituted by the Belgians 100 years ago, who regarded the Congo as a giant reservoir of precious resources to be exploited with no regard for the indigenous population which has always been regarded as surplus to requirements, as expendable. Mobutu continued this, enriching himself massively in the process, and today's warlords are doing the same on a geographically more modest scale, each in his own little kingdom. Resources are taken out of the country, but nothing is put back in; those responsible simply line their own pockets. That is how Congo has always worked, whether left to itself or not.

The further the decline of the county has progressed, the more this has taken on the appearance of a pure vulture economy. For example in mining; The industrial mining system set up by the Belgians, who basically divided the Congo into a set of gigantic concessions to be exploited by private companies, has long collapsed. There is no industrial mining today, but only artisanal mining with no capital expenditure, where people furrow around for riches in left-over pits and slag-heaps. Coltan, used for capacitors in mobile phones, was first found in abandoned tin mines; germanium, processed for use in armaments technology, e.g. in night vision systems, is found in a giant heap of mining scrap from the old copper and cobalt mines outside Lubumbashi. But although the mines are no longer worked in the way they once were, they still belong to somebody, and some even to several people at once, with rival concessions granted for the same area by Mobutu, then by Kabila, then by the rebels. This in itself is a major driving force of the war, as warlords can buy foreign support by promising to honour an existing concession and concession holders can buy local militias to safeguard their interests.

In this way, war becomes the continuation of business by other means and vice versa. There has been much debate about all this, about the way that business interests and the illegal exploitation of the Congo's natural resources fuel the war. A UN Panel has produced detailed investigations, naming individuals and companies involved, including most of the generals of the Congo and the neighbouring countries involved, and a host of major international firms. This is certainly crucial to understanding the dynamic of war. But there is a problem with this: it is usually presented as something new, as a new kind of war different from the old and therefore demanding new kinds of responses. In the light of what I have outlined, it is clear that Congo's resource wars are nothing new but on the contrary rather old, repeating something which has been going on in the country since colonial times, entrenching existing structures of misrule and misappropriation which are responsible for reducing the Congo to the state it is in.

It is important to be aware of this because it means that trying to go back to a supposedly better past will not work and that expecting change simply through ending the war is a vain hope. Many lobbyists, when arguing for measures against the exploitation of the Congo, seem to think that there must be a magic wand somewhere which will make all these nasty people go away and then normal ordinary Congolese can at last get on with their real lives, go back to their villages, plough their fields, grow vegetables, trade in little markets and rebuild a functioning civil society. But this cruelly underestimates the dimension of the problem. As I said at the beginning, it is hard to talk about the Congo in a way that adequately conveys the scale of destruction the country has undergone.

The war has forced major social changes which will not be reversed by peace. War and militia terror have caused massive depopulation of entire regions, hand in hand with rapid urbanisation in a few relatively secure urban centres - cities like Goma or Bukavu have grown from under 100.000 people to over 500.000 in the course of a generation with most of the increase coming in the last five years in the form of destitute peasants assembling on the edge of slums. War and violent resource exploitation have monetised what little was left of the economy even in rural areas, so that the US dollar is now in general use even in some rural markets.

There is no prospect, even if the war were suddenly to stop overnight, that everybody would simply go home and pretend nothing had happened - all the more because even before the war life was no idyll. Colonial destruction, the wars after independence, the violence of the Mobutist state and the manipulation of ethnicity and social relations by the Mobutu regime have all left their mark. There is no normal life to be unearthed beneath the mess of war. The problem goes much deeper, affecting the entire structure of political life in the country and most social and economic relationships among its people.

War and its divisions have discredited and destroyed most existing structures of authority, but even before the war these were not stable. The Belgians simply took no notice of how Congolese organised themselves, or repressed them brutally if they did notice. Mobutu manipulated and reorganised traditional chiefdoms to secure loyalty and control. In the dying years of Mobutu, traditional and political leaders in the East were encouraged to form armed militias, consolidating their power by land-grabbing and ethnic wars. Some of today's armed groups are the remnants of the armies formed then, some the remnants of the resistance to this. But the torrent of war has swept even these structures of violence away. Traditional leaders and elders, who even a few years ago were claiming positions of leadership and at least pretended to exercise control over armed groups, have in many instances lost their power and been replaced by a generation of violent youth, a Congolese equivalent of L.A.'s urban gangs, children's armies under the command of children, who feel no need to respect any of their

predecessors as these apparently have not achieved anything positive.

None of this will be any different once - if - Congo is reunited under a National Unity government consisting of all warring parties, secured by UN troops and swelled by World Bank billions. It might even simply get worse. There is no historical precedent in the Congo for a government which identifies with its people or which emanates from the people. There are numerous precedents for governments with good intentions on paper resorting to violence in order to beat the Congo into a shape which can then be used by politicians, experts and investors to realise their own designs. The way that the Belgians, more than most colonial powers in Africa, forced Congolese to renounce their culture and background on becoming educated or ``évolué" has left its mark on both sides of the power divide, and the Congolese concerned alone are responsible for perpetuating or overcoming this state of affairs. Politicians and warlords are as distant now as ever, reincarnations of the thieves and autocrats of ages past, who do not need their populations and are not needed by them. Civil society groupings have had to develop in an atmosphere of suspicion and social division instead of flourishing in a free environment and so have been prone to being abused as instruments of polarisation by leaders in search of a power base.

As for possible action by the outside world, whose collusion in the destruction of the Congo either through profiteering or passive acceptance is obvious to all Congolese, any answer has to take into account the changes of recent years, not pretend they haven't happened. Striving for grand solutions which take into account all vagaries of international power politics and international law is a luxury of the West. In the meantime, the Congolese are dying. If the present state of affairs continues, in a few years time there will nobody left in large areas of the war-affected zones of the country. At stake is people's survival.

At the same time, the Congolese cannot be reduced to a quivering mass of helpless humanity. The bottom line for our understanding has to be that the Congo, whatever its condition today, is an internationally recognised country with citizens who have rights and should be able to claim them and who require support in order to do so. Thus the first thing to do is to find out and monitor exactly what is happening on the ground. Then lessons can be drawn from that, possibly only in a small way with a local perspective, but at least drawing on real experiences and developments and not on abstract political claims or ideological prejudice.

There is a responsibility here for governments of rich countries, whose citizens play a much bigger role in the Congolese mess than their home countries realise. For example, some of the major economic agents in Eastern Congo are German. There is the mine owner Karl-Heinz Albers, who mines niobium and pyrochlore from Lweshé mine north of Goma, was at



least for a time a major coltan exporter of the region and is one of the main employers of North Kivu province. His business empire is opaque, some of his activities are questionable, but he provides regular paid jobs, each of which presumably feeds an extended family, and runs schooling and other social services for his employees and the village of his mine. In a similar position is the Pharmakina firm in Bukavu, run by Germans and partly in German ownership, making anti-malaria drugs from quinine, market leader in its field, the biggest employer in South Kivu and possibly the only remaining industrial plant in the region besides the adjacent brewery, and also the owner of large tracts of land which straddle local militia frontlines, some of which have been turned over to agricultural cooperatives. Or the German NGO "Deutsche Welthungerhilfe", which in North Kivu is devoting itself to reconstituting the old network of rural feeder roads in order to revitalise the local rural economy around Goma and Butembo. Hundreds of kilometres of roads have been rebuilt by the local population with the help of DWHH on a food-for-work basis, opening up access to land and markets and contributing to social stability, and the NGO was the first to clear Goma of lava after the volcano eruption of January 2002.

Taken together, these three German initiatives probably have more economic clout in the Kivu than anything the RCD has ever done. I have stressed exclusively the positive aspects of this - there are numerous negative ones too - in order to emphasise that it is possible to do something and that the state of war and decline must not be accepted passively. All these operators are working in a vacuum: there are no fixed rules governing their behaviour, they have no idea what will happen in a few years or what the consequences of their action will be, and if the major individuals concerned leave, everything could collapse overnight. Germany has a clear responsibility to make sure this does not happen. The same goes for other countries in a similar position.

Of course this is an untenable situation. Congolese should not have to depend on the mercy and sense of initiative of a few outsiders who happen to act in an enlightened way. There is a crying need to draw lessons from the experiences of these people and the experiences of the Congolese with them, and to systematize these into possible courses of action for other agents who might wish to become engaged and for any kind of state apparatus which might one day emerge from the detritus of the Congo today. But this precisely is the challenge. Trying to find a way out of the war is also an opportunity - an opportunity to avoid repeating mistakes, to avoid falling back into courses of action which the Congo has already suffered from before. There can be no other starting point than that which already exists.

By Dominic Johnson

*This text is based on a lecture given by the author in Weikersheim, Germany on 14 December 2002.*

## Congo: such a long colonization !

### A slow rot

At the end of this first trimester of 2003, the population of DR Congo is still walking the *via dolorosa* and the outcome is still uncertain. Even if we are no longer talking of trench warfare, the other war, the war of constant insecurity, of misery, of hunger and sickness is an established phenomenon, and is ravaging the Congolese population. At Ankoro, in Katanga, government troops killed civilians without any repugnance; in Oriental Province and North Kivu, scenes of cannibalism imputed to the rebel soldiers of Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC shocked the whole world and were condemned by the Security Council of the United Nations. RCD soldiers, in the name of liberation, have sown desolation in Uvira and Walikale.

As for the region of Ituri, it has become sadly famous for interethnic massacres. Each tribe is continually looking for ways to put the other down, relying on the mercenary troops of one or other Congolese politico-military force. Those whom we are used to calling 'allies', meaning the governments of belligerent African countries in the Congolese war, spoken of as the first African world war, intervene by arming and giving military training to militia groups.

And the consequence? DRC has become a dumping ground for arms of every sort, and a sporting ground for unscrupulous warlords. It suffices to control a small portion of territory, acquired with the military and financial help of an ally, to proclaim oneself king of the Mini-Republic, and begin to extract the local minerals or to take up any other sort of nefarious traffic. Rare animal and vegetable species are disappearing in great numbers. The okapi of the Garamba Park in Oriental Province are being sold at derisory prices, gorillas from the mountains of North and South Kivu are massacred and sold, the hard-woods of the equatorial forests of Beni and Oriental Province are felled and clandestinely exported.

In the meantime, generous contracts are signed by the leaders on both sides of the front lines: vast expanses of Katanga have been granted to President Mugabe of Zimbabwe and his family, the exploitation of oil in the Semliki valley (Oriental and Kivu Provinces) has been granted to Heritage Oil; what can we say of other exploitations where the contracts are kept secret? Niobium at Lueshe in North Kivu, gold in Ituri, cobalt in Katanga, diamonds in Kasai and Oriental Province, tantalite, oil, *et cetera*. The list would be incomplete if I did not mention the enriched uranium of the nuclear plant at the University of Kinshasa, some quantities of which have been identified in an international traffic.

### Congo – a victim of its own natural wealth

Even if what is laid out above shocks the world today, we must point out that the DRC has been a victim of its own scandalous wealth since the beginning of time. Its discovery by the western world, firstly in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, then later inside its present borders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, gives it the status of an *eldorado* of inexhaustible wealth to be grabbed by any adventurer from anywhere in the world.

It is a fact that this vast territory in the heart of Africa has the reputation of being a geological scandal, but unfortunately its inhabitants have never benefited from it. This made a famous Swiss sociologist, Jean Zeigler, say: "The Zairian people is like a beggar sitting on a pile of gold." (in Patrice Lumumba, Justice for the Hero, L. Mulopo Kapita)

The present author wrote in September 1999: "The Congolese state was badly thought out at the start. It is respected and loved only as it is seen through the prism of its mineral deposits. Its wealth of human resources interests no one..." (Regards Croisés No. 2: Beyond the national dialogue: When will we see the new Bulamatari?)

This image that is projected by the Congo, which the Congolese themselves boast of, attracts the covetousness of people from all over the world. Yesterday, it was mostly the western powers and their multinationals; today several African countries have also joined the dance. In this interminable adventure, it is always the Congolese people who pay the highest price. Here we have the impression that history is repeating itself. Joseph Conrad already spoke of "the most infamous scramble for loot that has ever disfigured the history of the human conscience." He was alluding to the expedition carefully launched by the King of the Belgians Leopold II, master of the Congo, which curiously he never visited, his private property from 1885 to 1908 when he gave it to the Belgian State, which would continue his work. It is only recently that serious research exposed clearly how the looting of the Congo during that period caused the death of millions of the inhabitants of this country.

Adam Hochschild shocked the world with his horrible pictures of Congolese with heads or arms cut off. (in King Leopold's Ghost: a forgotten holocaust) In this extraordinary work, he shows how King Leopold II "looked for anything that could be harvested quickly." To do this, he had to subject the inhabitants to inhuman conditions which cost lives that no one before had reported. Adam Hochschild, revolted by this macabre discovery, wrote: "Congo was the scene of one of the biggest massacres of our time." These scenes of colonization of "the only colony in the world belonging to an individual" are unfortunately still seen today. The war which the Congo is experiencing since the end of the reign of the dictator Mobutu in 1987, has brought to the light what had been going on in secret for ages. The country has been and still is being bled of its riches, once again at the cost of human lives. Even so, we have to point out that this has always been facilitated by the absence of a responsible State, which cares for the interests of its population. In the place of such a State, there has always been a complicit oligarchy taking part in the looting and destruction of the country. Independence gained in 1960 has been simply 'robbing St Peter to pay St Paul'. The white colonialists gave way to their black friends. In the popular idiom of lingala, that is referred to as: "mundele ya lopooso mwindo", translated as the "white man with a black skin".

### **" Uhuru / Lipanda Cha Cha Cha!"**

This famous song of Kabasele, the great Congolese musician of the 60s made all of black Africa dance to its rhythms at the time of the independences.

To the rhythms of “lipanda (independence) cha cha cha”, Congolese of all walks of life heard the bell of freedom ring, bringing in a new era. At the heart of the action, a resolute man, Lumumba, emerged to prominence which drove him towards other nationalist revolutionary Africans, N’krumah and Sekou Touré. His apogee lasted no longer than the bloom of a rose. Democratically elected as Prime Minister, he led the country for a few days only, just long enough to deal with secessions and the refusal of the colonial power to accept the change with wisdom. How quickly these hopes were disappointed! Emery Patrice Lumumba, the incarnation of everyone’s hopes, was assassinated by his compatriots of the political class, serving the interests of western powers. His disappearance is seen as a curse which affects all the gangrenous Congolese society with division and the race for power.

The same people who put out that flame so recently lit have remained in charge since that time. They worked under the rod of Mobutu, and they hope to go on after his demise. In fact, how can we hope to get the Congo out of this state, using the same people who brought the country so low?

It is even more sad to see this oligarchy transform itself into a monarchy in a Republic which calls itself Democratic. Joseph Kabila, by twists and turns that have not yet been made clear, has inherited the throne of his father Laurent Désiré. Jean-Pierre Bemba, son of one of the greatest looters of the country under Mobutu’s regime, and even his son-in-law, has proclaimed himself King in the North East of the country. At his side is Olivier, the son of Cleophas Kamitatu, the first governor of the capital after the departure of the colonizers. His sons themselves tear each other apart to decide who most deserves the inheritance of the late Marshal. These are the people who make up the political class, who hold the population hostage and keep it in abject poverty. Independence was the start of a race for power which has never stopped to this day, nearly two generations later.

The game the politicians are playing did not start today. Belonging to a political party opens the door to illicit wealth. What the Congolese call “being a political tramp”, meaning wandering from one political party to another, has always happened. An opportunistic and often ephemeral grouping of political parties into cartels or unions without any clear agenda is not a new phenomenon. We saw the Holy Union of opposition parties opposing the Mobutu regime fall apart, after giving hope to the population in the 90s. The transitional parliament coming out of the Sovereign National Conference in 1992 was soon drowned by political cliques in the pay of the dictator Mobutu. A political party, as soon as it is born, splits into wings because of the ambition of its members and their inability to manage minor conflicts. Thus the very nationalist and popular MNC (National Congolese Movement) of Lumumba broke apart very quickly into MNC/Lumumba and MNC/Kalonji. What can we say of the present Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) which has given birth to the little RCDs: RCD/ML, RCD/National, RCD/Congo, *et cetera*? This ‘wing’ spirit has even become a social phenomenon, because the Congolese musicians, famous throughout the world for their songs, have also become experts in this sort of division.

As a backdrop, there is a complete system of corruption which was woven a long time ago: politician or musician, money will make him change sides. This social phenomenon has finally brought the population to a life of expediency, even of

delinquency. Is it any surprise that one of the great Congolese musicians, idol of the youth, Papa Wemba, is today rotting in a French jail for deals that are unworthy of his rank and prestige which he spent many long years to earn?

So then, what should we expect of the peace that this political class can bring us, who for the Nth time will meet in South Africa to sign, this time at last, the texts which will create the transitional institutions? Pressure from the international community will doubtless ensure their signature. In fact, it is they who wrote the constitution for the Congolese, they have promised wonders if the agreements are signed. But, in reality, what or who is this international community? What does it look like, after the outbreak of the Iraq war in this month of March 2003?

## **The mirage of a transition towards democracy**

As soon as the agreement is signed, the famous inter-Congolese dialogue will be officially ended, and the transitional government will be set up. Most Congolese are waiting for this time at the end of the long tunnel. **But are we right to dream?**

A quick reading of what can be seen in the East of the country, where I am writing this text, incites some worries that could affect this dream. Some key elements can support this:

### **1. The weakened UNO:**

The Anglo-American march on Iraq was a huge blow to the UNO. Tomorrow, the UN will have great difficulty stopping any governments ready to invade other people's territory. But even before that, the UNO had frequently been a huge disappointment to populations who believed in it. The result is a profound distrust and a crying lack of credibility

### **2. The Spartan war**

The Spartans, famous warriors Ancient Greece, had a particular style of waging war. They ran away before their enemies and then suddenly turned round to counter attack. This tactic created a surprise which gave them an advantage and enabled them to win the battle. If you look at what Rwanda has done in withdrawing its troops in an orderly fashion in September-October of last year, there are some curious similarities with Sparta.

These troops have, to everyone's surprise, climbed into new trucks to go back home. Each time, before crossing the border, solemn and impeccably correct, they said farewell to the Congolese. The Rwandan government, in this manner, respected the agreement signed with Kinshasa in Pretoria which stipulates the withdrawal of their troops from Congo. The Congolese government, on the other hand has been unable to honour its promise: to remove the ex-FAR and the Interahamwe militias, the authors of the 1994 genocide. The comedy of their disarmament and their cantonment in Kamina turned sour, because fratricidal combats opposed these 'guest' mercenaries and the Congolese army. At the same time, some positions previously occupied by the RCD and their allies from Rwandan have been retaken by Congolese militias, accompanied by Rwandan and Burundian militias, all recipients of massive Congolese government support.

These so-called negative forces according to the agreements no longer hide their collaboration with Kinshasa, who in this way is at the threshold of Rwanda and Burundi. Add to this the latest threat of renewed war between Uganda and Rwanda on Congolese soil, because of recent event in Ituri, it would only take a spark for hostilities to break out again. The consequences of renewed fighting could be very serious. The Congolese population already the martyr of decades of war and misery, does not deserve this fate. The population has a right to benefit freely from its wealth, and to develop to its full potential in its own land. Who will come and free the Congolese people from this long colonization? Who among her sons and daughters, is ready to lead the Congo towards new aspirations?

How many Congolese have read this declaration of the late much-mourned Patrice Emery Lumumba:

“Throughout my long struggle for the independence of my country, I have never doubted for a single instant the ultimate triumph of the cause for which I and my companions have devoted our lives. ... History will have the final word...”

Myself, I know that my country which has suffered so deeply, will be able to defend its '**independence and freedom**'.

These words, spoken in 1960, apply equally today. Congo is waiting for the long delayed day when she can begin to write her own true history.

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March 2003