

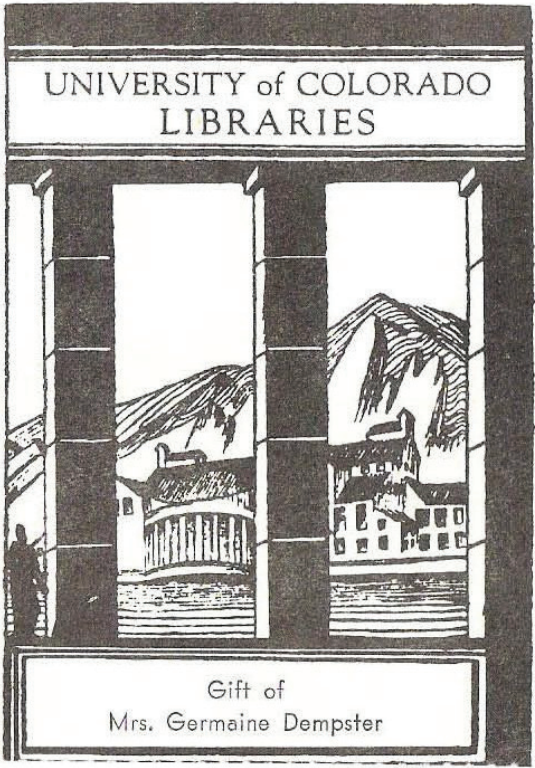
THE
BELGIAN
CONGO

Reservoir of the Allies



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ERRATUM

Page 31, Para 2, Lines 7 & 8, should read:
 "Consider, for example, Multatuli's
 "eloquent indictment of Dutch
 "Colonial methods and "Uncle
 "Tom's Cabin."

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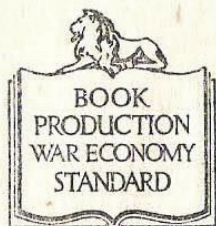
BELGIAN CONGO

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University of Colorado at Boulder



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THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	v
CHAPTER	
I. HISTORY OF THE CONGO	1
II. POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANISATIONS	9
III. ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE CONGO	13
IV. NATIVE PEASANTRY	20
V. WHITE SETTLEMENT	23
VI. CHARACTERISTICS OF CONGO ECONOMICS	27
VII. SOCIAL POLICY	30
VIII. THE LABOUR QUESTION	33
IX. HEALTH SERVICES	36
X. EDUCATION	39
XI. GERMAN COLONIAL DEMANDS	41
XII. CONCLUSION	46

ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
COPPER SMELTING IN THE BELGIAN CONGO	6
COFFEE PLANTATION IN THE KIVU DISTRICT	6
THE RIVER PORT OF MATADI	7
STANLEYVILLE FROM THE AIR	7
RUBBER PLANTATION IN THE BELGIAN CONGO	22
BELGIAN NATIVE TROOPS AT EXERCISE	22
BELGIAN NATIVE TRENCH MORTAR CREWS.	23
AN ATTACK THROUGH THE BUSH	23

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INTRODUCTION

THE BELGIAN CONGO

ATTENTION has been drawn by recent events to the Belgian Congo. When General de Gaulle took over control in French Equatorial Africa, the Governor-General of the Belgian colony co-operated with him in every way.

It was from Leopoldville on October 27th, 1940, that the leader of the Free French Forces broadcast his proclamation creating the Defence Council of the French Empire. At the same time he spoke of the close ties between the French possessions, the British colonies and the Belgian Congo.

It will be remembered, too, that Belgium clearly indicated the nature of her diplomatic relations with Italy when on May 10th, 1940, Germany invaded Belgium without declaration of war and in violation of her international pledges. The Belgian Government did not declare war on the Axis ally, for at that time there had been no military intervention from Italy in Africa. Then Italian submarines torpedoed a Belgian merchant vessel; Italian planes used Belgian air fields as bases for bombing England, as stated in the official Italian communiqué. At the beginning of January 1941 the refugee Government in London made known to Rome that Belgium considered herself at war with Germany's ally. This step was of more than purely legal interest. In point of fact the strategic position of the Congo was such that she was able to intervene actively in the Sudan, which she did not hesitate to do. The Belgian colony soon sent an armed contingent to join the British troops fighting in that sector.

On January 21st, 1941, England and Belgium signed an economic agreement which placed all the resources of the Congo at the disposal of Great Britain. These were purchased not only for private consumption but also for Government use: copper, cotton, copra, nuts, palm oil, etc.

Furthermore, the British Government was contemplating the purchase of tin and sugar. Article 7 of the agreement contained

a clause of particular importance : that products from the Congo should not be subject to less favourable customs regulations than products from the British colonies. The agreement also provided that priority should be given to cargoes coming from the Congo and as far as possible the legitimate wish should be respected that Belgian freighters should be used whenever possible for such cargoes.

The Belgian Government undertook the requisite administrative and legislative measures to make the blockade effective. Finally, the Congo put all her gold and foreign currency at the disposal of Great Britain.

At an interview which took place at the end of January 1941 between General Smuts, Leader of the Government of the Union of South Africa, and M. de Vleeschauwer, Belgian Minister for the Colonies, the latter clearly indicated what the attitude of the Belgian Congo would be towards possible future developments in military preparations. He alluded to the possibility of South African troops using colonial territory for strategic manoeuvres. It will be shown later that the strategic role of the Belgian Congo, should events demand it, would not be limited to such passive collaboration. The participation of Belgian colonial troops in the operations in the African sector north of the Equator has already shown that Belgium continues to make an effective military contribution to the war in spite of the capitulation of her metropolitan army. Her airmen, too, have never ceased to fight side by side with their comrades in the R.A.F.

I

HISTORY OF THE CONGO.

THE Belgian Congo, by her origin, international status and development, represents a unique case in colonial history. Belgium, a colonial Power of secondary importance, is the only country in the world whose Colonial Empire is contained in one single block. The territories over which she exercises the mandate conferred upon her by the Allied and Associated Powers at the end of the war of 1914-18 are immediately adjacent to her own African possessions. The development of the Congo, which lies over 7,000 miles from the motherland, was entrusted to a country that had no merchant navy and even now has not a very large one.

It is generally assumed that Leopold II was the first to concern himself with the colonial future of his country. This is not the case. His predecessor, Leopold I, had made several attempts to interest his compatriots in colonial affairs. All his tentative efforts, however, more or less failed for the same reasons : incompetence and public indifference.

In the reign of Leopold I negotiations were opened to found Belgian business concerns on the Gold Coast in Spanish Guinea. In 1847 a treaty was even signed granting the Belgians a concession on both banks of the River Munez. In 1850, the Ras of Ethiopia offered Belgium the sovereignty of the province of Aghame. Fearing international complications, the Government imposed such conditions on the ratification of this proposed agreement that the idea had to be abandoned. The island of Cosumel, off the Yucatan Peninsula, where there are vast forests and silver deposits, became in turn the subject of negotiations. About 1850, Leopold I tried to direct Belgian overseas interests towards the Philippine Islands and the island of Nicolar in the Gulf of Bengal. At about the same time, the attention of the King was attracted to New Zealand. Not one of these projects went beyond the stage of negotiation and discussion save that of San Thomé of Guatemala, but this experiment ended in disaster.

Unhealthy conditions and ignorance put an end to the undertaking; of the 800 colonists who braved the adventure, 200 perished in the first year.

At first, as we shall see, the Congo was in the extraordinary position, with the consent of the Powers concerned, of being the personal property of one man alone—King Leopold II. Endowed with a remarkable sense of values and great foresight, he persuaded the Belgians to accept the idea of colonies, in spite of their well-known reluctance.

The Congo can be called an international creation, international in its origin and in its present status. It was made possible by the collaboration of men of different nationalities.

Its present development is in the hands of whites from all over the world. Belgians are, naturally, in the majority as administrative, military, legal and religious affairs are mainly in their hands. But no other equatorial colony has such a high percentage of foreign elements.

Other nationalities, too, were among those to explore the Congo. Many foreign officers fought side by side with the Belgians in the war against the Arabs and also in the Mahdist campaign. There are more foreign business undertakings in the Congo than Belgian firms. About ten years ago, the head of the Medical Service was an Italian and even to-day a large number of doctors are recruited from other countries.

It was in 1482 that the Portuguese admiral, Diego Cao, discovered the mouth of the River Congo. A century later, a Belgian trader, Pierre van den Broeck, settled in the Congo. And in 1651, Belgian Capucin Friars were the first to convert the natives.

The English were the first to undertake the scientific exploration of the Congo Basin. To them we owe the first definite geographical data; in 1816, Turkey explored the region round the water-falls; in 1857 Burton and Speke penetrated into the jungle as far as Tanganyika and a year later Speke reached Lake Victoria. The most famous explorer of all was Livingstone, whose life is an admirable example of tenacity and unselfishness. Livingstone was remarkable for the number of his African journeys and for the importance of his discoveries, but above all, he will be

remembered for the affection he bore the natives. The result was the great humanitarian movement which terminated the victorious fight against slavery. He was the first to cross Africa from West to East. He undertook this venture in 1852, equipped only with the barest essentials. He explored the Kasai, Lake Morre and Lake Bangwelo as well as the Upper Zambezi and traced the Congo up to Nyangwe. With other bold and adventurous spirits of those heroic days, Livingstone is buried in African soil. He died in 1863, at Tabora. Cameron discovered the tomb of this man whose memory was held in such high esteem by the native population. Cameron himself undertook a journey of exploration, the exact opposite of Livingstone's; he crossed Africa from East to West in 1873 to 1875.

One man was destined, by reason of his striking personality, to be the pivot in the Central African problem. He had pointed the way to colonisation in 1861 when he wrote a book entitled *A Supplement to the Work of 1830 (Le Complément de l'œuvre de 1830)*. This man was Leopold II, King of the Belgians. Shortly after the death of the great explorer and missionary he summoned a Geographical Conference in Brussels. The meeting was held in 1876 and was composed of geographical experts, famous explorers, well-known public figures and politicians. England, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, Italy, France and Belgium were represented. As a result the International African Association was founded, an association with national committees in each of the countries represented. It had, as object, the systematic exploration of Africa. The first expedition was organised by the Belgian Committee. In the course of eight years, from 1876 to 1884, Belgium sent expeditions under the following leaders to the 'black continent': Cambier, Popelin, Carter, Cadenhead, Ramaeckers, Beckers, Storms, Becker and Dahnis. Meanwhile, between 1874 and 1877, Stanley, whom the natives had christened "The Breaker of Rocks" (Baula Matari), had crossed Africa from East to West. His sensational account of the journey appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* and his exploits revealed to the world the secrets of a vast continent.

By tracing the course of the Congo, Stanley presented civilisa-

tion with an unknown continent comparable in its vastness and network of rivers only with Brazil. Stanley as an explorer ranks with the greatest of all time: Vasco da Gama, Columbus and Magellan. Leopold II, a shrewd judge of men, immediately took a liking to the outspoken writer. The King's efforts, however, were not received as eagerly as he who had taken the initiative had hoped. When Stanley disembarked at Marseilles on his return from Africa, he was met by two representatives from the King of the Belgians, who pressed him to go to Belgium before returning to England. This somewhat sudden and unexpected invitation he refused. His efforts to interest his own country in Central Africa were in vain. His memoirs and diary show many traces of his bitter disappointment at the indifference and, even worse, at the disbelief of his countrymen. Stanley was not given at home the recognition he deserved. His success was so startling that it went against him. His humble origin, of which he made a great mystery, prejudiced the snobs, for they could not believe that he was the authentic hero of the discoveries he claimed as his. His discoveries overthrew all previously accepted beliefs. He had triumphed over such incredible obstacles that his story sounded like that of an impostor, and his moody and difficult character contributed to his unpopularity.

A separate branch of the International African Association soon developed under the auspices of the King himself. It was known as the Committee for the Study of the Upper Congo, and Leopold II appointed himself as president. It was in the name of this new institution that Stanley returned to Africa after his hesitation had been overcome. The King displayed great tact in nominating various representatives of other nationalities to the new committee: a Frenchman and a German, the famous explorer Nachtigal, to whom Africa was already familiar. In spite of the secrecy demanded of them, one can be certain that all these men had divined the intentions of the promoter of this undertaking which was to have such unforeseen consequences. The contract which Stanley accepted is very interesting: he pledged his services for five years, with the option of renewing the term of service. For this he was to receive £1,000 a year

from the King's Civil List. He was to abstain from making or publishing any statement relevant to his observations during this mission.

The new expedition had a purely economic object: to forge and strengthen new connections and ties by making treaties with the native chiefs. This daring programme produced brilliant results; 500 treaties were signed and 40 trading posts were opened. Four Belgian officers, Coquilhat, Hannsens, Vandeveld and Vangale, accompanied Stanley on his journey. These men founded Leopoldville. The International Congo Association had by now become the owner of a considerable part of Central Africa. Such a surprising state of affairs naturally gave rise to a certain amount of disquietude and envy. This was increased when the United States, on April 10th, 1884, recognised the blue star flag of the Company as that of a friendly government. Portugal and England were foremost amongst those to take a lively interest in these developments. Germany, in her turn, recognised the Company on November 3rd, 1884. France, meanwhile, had concluded an Agreement with the latter, whereby she undertook to respect the territories of the Company, at the same time reserving the right of option should the Company ever have to cede these lands (April 23rd, 1884). Later, in 1895, France agreed that this right of option should never be exercised to the detriment of Belgium.

This skilful, subtle and complicated diplomatic game illustrates admirably the period of imperial expansion which marked the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Great Powers tried to prevent their neighbours from taking possession of large empires, while hoping, no doubt, the weakness of the new organisations would make them heirs to any future spoils. Such hypothetical desires never came to fruition, thanks to the skill and energy of a monarch who possessed acute business acumen and a flair for international affairs. His genius for finance had already been revealed by his personal interest in the Suez Canal Company.

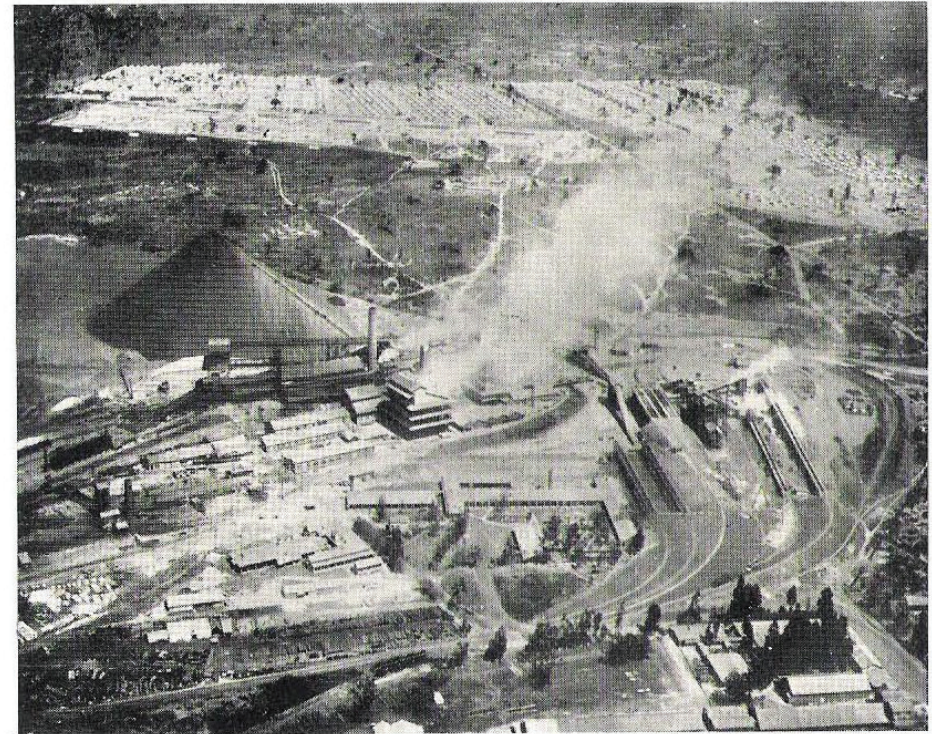
With France's agreement, Bismarck summoned the Conference of Berlin, at which the following Powers were represented: America, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany,

Holland, Hungary, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey. The Company was accorded the status of a sovereign state and on July 1st, 1885, the Independent State of the Congo was founded. This State was always to remain neutral. The Conference further imposed a system of trade and navigation open to all. This latter obligation applied not only to the Congo Basin but also to the Niger Basin. It has never proved disadvantageous to the prosperity of the colony. Article 10 of the Berlin Protocol guaranteed the neutrality of the Congo Basin.

Leopold II declared in 1889 his intention of handing over to Belgium the sovereign rights he had exercised over the Congo. A convention was ratified by the Belgian Parliament on July 25 between Belgium and the Independent State, giving Belgium the right to annex the Congo within a period of ten years. A bill to implement this annexation was laid before the Chamber on August 7th, 1901. It was not passed by the Chamber until August 20th, 1908, and by the Senate on September 9th. On the 15th of the following November the Independent State ceased to exist. Thus the Congo became a Belgian colony.

It was some time before England recognised the annexation, and the Franco-German Treaty of 1911 stressed the fact that the two powers were far from considering the existing state of affairs in Central Africa as permanent. This was three years before the World War.

In 1889 a Conference to abolish all slave trade was held at Great Britain's instigation, and an Agreement was drawn up which was not signed until March 18th, 1891. The Independent State of the Congo was compelled to expel the Arabs who were indulging in slave trading from their territory. Military operations started on October 21st, 1891, and ended victoriously in 1894. A large number of Belgian officers covered themselves with glory: Chaltin, Dahnis, Dorme, Five, Henry, Lothaire, and Ponthier, as well as the heroic sergeant de Bruyne. As a result of the massacre of General Gordon, which brought about the fall of Khartoum in 1885, the Mahdists occupied the basin of the Upper Nile. Belgian Colonial troops joined forces with Lord Kitchener's Egyptian Army. This campaign was marked from



COPPER IN THE BELGIAN CONGO—THE LUMBUMBASHI SMELTING WORKS OF THE "STAR OF THE CONGO" COPPER MINES.

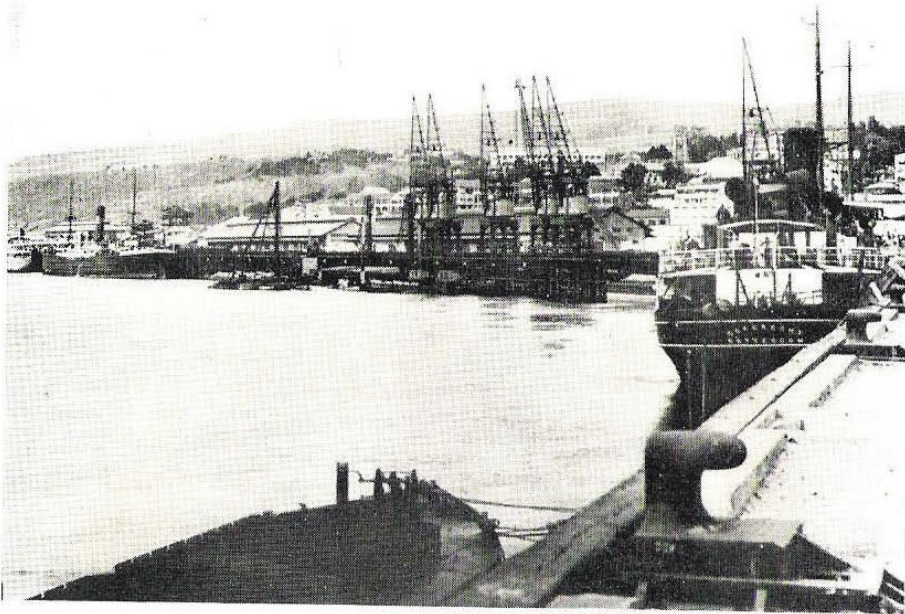


A COFFEE PLANTATION IN THE KIVU DISTRICT.

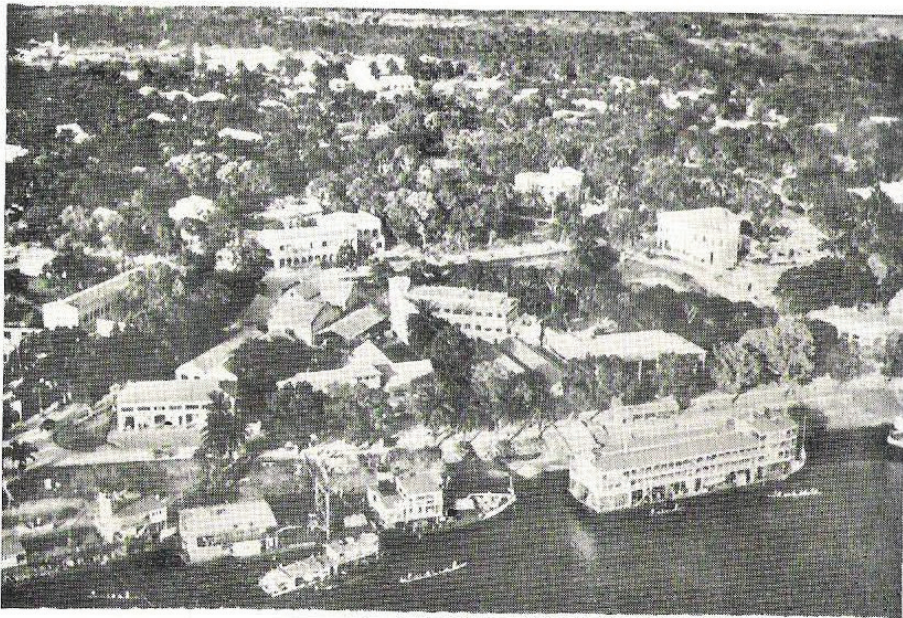
the start by set-backs ; part of a detachment mutinied, but on February 14th, 1897, the ferocious battle of Redjaf put an end to the Dherbish resistance.

It will be remembered that the Berlin Protocol imposed neutrality on the whole Congo Basin. On August 4th, 1914, however, Germany invaded Belgium in spite of signed treaties, and the question arose as to the future position of the Congo. On August 7th, the Brussels Government informed her Allies that she did not wish hostilities to extend to Africa, but this was a one-sided hope. The Germans, in spite of the Berlin Protocol, did not hesitate to carry the conflict onto Congo territory. An armed force of the colony co-operated with French and English troops in military operations in Sangha, the Cameroons and Rhodesia. The year 1915 was devoted to the creation of an up-to-date Colonial Army, an undertaking which required unremitting effort. In five months 60,000 loads had to be carried by man-power to supply an Expeditionary Force. This Force was commanded by General Tombeur under whom Colonel Molitor and Colonel Olsen were serving. The first campaign, which began on April 18th, 1916, ended victoriously with the fall of Tabora on September 19th, 1916. This campaign was remarkable for the number of battles, at Kasibu, Kigali and Nyanga, and for the rapid occupation, on June 23rd, of Usumbura and a whole group of other posts. The whole of the Ruanda-Urundi was quickly subdued, and Kigoma on Lake Tanganyika, the terminus of the Dar-es-Salaam Railway, was taken on July 28th.

These initial operations, crowned as they were by success, did not put a stop to German resistance in East Africa. In conjunction with the Allies, the Belgians resumed the offensive in the month of April 1917. By bold and clever manœuvring in the region of Lake Victoria, the Belgians succeeded in driving back and dispersing to the East a large German column which was eventually captured by the British. In August, Belgian troops were operating with success on the Ruahi, which they crossed and held after much heavy fighting. The operations ended with the capture of the town of Mahenge on August 9th. The Belgians pursued the enemy to within 725 miles of Tabora



QUAYS AT MATADI—ONE OF THE RIVER PORTS OF THE BELGIAN CONGO.



STANLEYVILLE—A PORT ON THE RIVER CONGO HALF-WAY BETWEEN THE ATLANTIC AND THE INDIAN OCEAN.

and forced the Germans to take refuge on Portuguese territory in the Mozambique area. Belgian troops also took part in operations in Rhodesia. To the names already mentioned, the following Belgian officers must be added: Huyghe, Moulaerd, Weber, Bataille, Rouling and Thomas.

* * * * *

By the Treaty of Versailles, Belgium was granted the Mandate for the Sultanates of Ruanda and Urundi by the Allied Powers. These densely populated territories cover an area of 33,750 square miles.

II

POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM

THE Belgian Congo covers an area of 1,500,000 square miles, to which must be added 33,750 square miles of mandated territory. It is eighty times as large as Belgium. It would cover an equivalent area in Europe stretching from Warsaw to Gibraltar. It is, however, inhabited by peoples as different, for example, as the French, Poles, Germans, Dutch and Spanish. The intellectual and economic development of the native tribes varies greatly, although there is a tendency to group them all under the general heading of Africans.

The native population has been estimated at 10,304,084 inhabitants, that is to say, 11.33 to the square mile. There are 25,209 resident whites in the colony, of whom 17,536 are of Belgian and 7,673 of other nationalities.¹

In the grand total children under eighteen years of age represent 4.414 units. The white population can be grouped as follows:

- 2,205 civil servants, officials, etc., of the colony.
- 3,672 missionaries, of whom 2,825 are Roman Catholics.
- 6,944 employees of private firms.
- 2,396 individuals of independent means.
- 5,588 women other than nuns or missionaries.

¹ Proportion of Europeans to 10,000 natives (all figures quoted, unless otherwise stated, refer to 1938):

French West Africa	15
French Equatorial Africa	10
Angola (including the Mulattos)	200
Congo	24
Gold Coast	9
Belgian Katanga	65
Kenya	60
Nigeria	6
Tanganyika	16
Northern Rhodesia	84
Uganda	6

Little more than fifty years ago the Congo was still in a state of barbarism. The different tribes were more or less continuously at war. Slave raids resulted in large stretches of territory becoming depopulated. Cannibalism was widespread. The blacks were prey to innumerable superstitions resulting in the most cruel practices, such as infanticide, the slaying of widows, many forms of witchcraft and religious ceremonies of a most bloodthirsty nature. Such practices have not yet altogether disappeared, although very great progress indeed has been made. It is not long since the administrative authorities had to take rigorous measures against the mysterious sect known as the "Leopard Men," who were addicted to the worst cruelties imaginable.

The history of the Congo shows that its development was subject at first to rule-of-thumb methods which were far from perfect. Their abolition called for much energy on the part of those who were bequeathed this heritage in the name of the Belgian people. But everyone is ready to admit that Belgium soon found and adopted a rational colonial policy, although she had no previous experience in this perilous sphere. It was a hard task, and those who undertook it had at first insufficient means at their disposal for its accomplishment. The problems which arose were on the same vast scale as the Continent, a continent where all things loom large, rivers, forests, animals, limitless horizons, even the sun, the mountains and the deserts.

On the creation of the Independent State of the Congo, a necessity of primary importance right from the beginning was the linking up of the different territories as quickly as possible. Needless to say, the political and administrative organisation was tested to the utmost by this step. It was a combination of improvised and rule-of-thumb methods, although the first two Governors were both British. Deplorable mistakes were made in every direction but especially, as will be shown later, in the economic and social spheres.

A really coherent and rational policy can only be said to have existed after the annexation of the Congo by Belgium. From that moment Belgium adopted a system of colonial government

based on the experience of others. Parliament delegated full legislative powers to the King to be exercised by decree.

Parliament, nevertheless, reserved the right of granting concessions to those bodies entrusted with the development of the natural resources of the territories. It controls the settlement of loans, as well as the ratification of commercial agreements. It debates and votes the Congo's Budget, going more thoroughly into the matter than is done in France or even in England.

Apart from Parliament, there is also a Colonial Council consisting of fourteen members, eight of whom are nominated by the King and the remainder by the Chamber and Senate. This Council has no executive powers, but it has the right to make recommendations and suggestions. It is consulted in connection with all decrees and its decisions in such matters are always published. It is fitting here to recall that one of the main concerns of Belgium's colonial policy has always been a deliberate regard for publicity, yet many critics, often insufficiently informed of the truth, ignore the fact that abundant documentary evidence concerning the administration proper of the colony is at their disposal. In addition, there are numerous treatises and papers dealing with colonial questions which can well bear comparison with those of other countries. It is indeed unfortunate that so many documents, especially official ones, should be the object of nothing more than malicious curiosity. This shows a great lack of interest in the question on the part of the public as a whole.

The Minister, although he has the right, never overrules a decision taken by the Colonial Council. As far as internal administration is concerned, it has passed through periods of centralisation and decentralisation to end in the adoption of a policy giving the Governor-General more far-reaching powers. When this reform came into being the main administrative bodies were basing their policy on the economic character of the regions concerned.

The handling of the native communities is in general outline nearer to the British system of indirect administration than to the French. All those who have been entrusted with the welfare of the colony since the time of Leopold II have tried more or less successfully to respect native institutions and customs in so far as

they have proved effective and useful. This is the only way to avoid disturbing unnecessarily the native mode of life. The natives are extremely sensitive to the introduction of any foreign elements into their own traditions, which are by no means all to be condemned or despised. The introduction of Western methods and ideas into a native environment nearly always has unfortunate results, one of the most alarming being depopulation. This has been proved in the Congo as elsewhere. The sudden contact of two civilisations so different in their origin and evolution is always detrimental to the less dynamic of the two.

The Belgian Colonial Authorities, after the annexation, therefore, settled themselves to the task of correcting the mistakes already made, of conciliating the natives and working in collaboration with them. They attempted to revert to the former tribal divisions which had been changed by the previous regime. They appealed to the tribal leaders and entrusted them with ever-increasing responsibilities. The choice of suitable people from among the natives is a very delicate matter, for due regard must be paid to their customs, their feeling of prestige and their loyalties. The appointment of a native of a different tribe to a position of responsibility and authority over a tribe not his own has always had regrettable consequences ending usually in abuse of authority, a failing as common to the black race as to others.

One of the most successful reforms was the creation of native councils. This helped to increase the dignity of the natives and enhance their sense of responsibility. In a further attempt to assist collaboration the native tribunals were asked to take part in judicial and legal affairs. There is an institution in the Congo which is quite independent of the authority of the Governor-General: the Commission for the Protection of Natives under the presidency of a High Court Judge.

This policy thus solves both the humanitarian and economic problems; labour would otherwise have been unobtainable, which would have rendered the development of the colony impossible. The aim in view is not the introduction of our Western civilisation and institutions, for this civilisation is in many ways not capable of adaptation for equatorial peoples.

III

ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE CONGO

WHEN the Congo was discovered, it was declared by some to be the richest land in the world, and by others to be a paltry heap of stones. Nobody really knew anything at all about it. Geological data had to be obtained before the enthusiasts could be separated from the detractors. Meanwhile, however, the territory of the newly founded state was subject to the most rudimentary, least rational and least humane forms of exploitation. Crying abuses were perpetrated, abuses which threatened to jeopardise even the abundant natural wealth of the Association's own territory. In point of fact, pillaging, or what the Germans called by a rather crude but descriptive word, *Raubwirtschaft*, was practised.

Other colonies, much older than the Congo, where the excuse of inexperience could not be made, were also subjected to the deplorable excess of *Raubwirtschaft*. In justice to human conscience it must be mentioned that indignant protests were made by the more enlightened groups of opinion.

The *Raubwirtschaft* had disastrous effects on the administrative rights of the native community. In order to obtain sufficient resources the new state had to grant vast concessions to private enterprises, in exchange for which it received the money necessary for the exercise of its authority. One particular group of capitalists acquired territory four times the size of Belgium. A stop has since been put to this exaggeratedly lucrative generosity, but by granting these immense concessions of land, the ground rights of the natives were completely ignored. These, moreover, are, or rather were, rather confused, the more so as the land that appeared to be vacant was not so in reality, as it served as pasturage for the tribes still living in a nomadic state.

From the economic point of view this type of exploitation bore much more resemblance to the rudimentary system of "squatting" than to any attempt at real estate valuation and estimated rentals—a system requiring a long period to mature. These rough-and-ready methods which gave very striking im-

mediate results compromised the future by completely destroying the sources of production, whereas if action of a far-seeing and preventative nature had been taken, the productive capacity of the soil would have been given new life. During this exceptional period, two products alone made up the output of the Congo: ivory and rubber. This state of affairs, which lasted twelve years, was to have deplorable economic consequences. Whole herds of elephants and the sources of production of wild rubber were destroyed. In the meantime regions like Malaya had wisely directed their attention to the scientific production of plantation rubber. The Congo rapidly lost the privileged position it had held on the international market; one figure alone is enough to show how widespread was the damage: in 1906 rubber represented 83.2 per cent. of the Congo exports, in 1935 it had fallen to $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. There are no more recent figures to hand, but it is doubtful whether this percentage has increased at all. Science has triumphed over rule-of-thumb methods. Present-day rubber is produced at lower cost prices and it seems doubtful whether the Congo will ever regain the ground lost through carelessness and greed.

From the social point of view, the result of these rudimentary methods were equally fatal. The Independent State had created State monopolies for the purchase of ivory and rubber. It is easy to imagine the position of the natives when confronted with one single customer only, and to make matters worse, this customer at the same time exercised complete state control over them. The position was further affected by the payment of premiums to the agents collecting these two products. Some of them, unscrupulous and heartless, committed revolting atrocities, which outraged the feelings of the whole world. A large number of eminent Belgians added their protests to those made in other countries, especially in England, against such behaviour. The annexation of the Congo, therefore, by Belgium was in every way a blessing. It was certainly so from the economic point of view.

Four distinct periods can be traced in the development of the Congo: the *Raubwirtschaft*; prospecting and equipment; the rise of industry; the establishment of balanced production.

The economic problem with which the Belgian Congo was

faced fifty years ago was somewhat more difficult to solve than certain armchair critics pretend. A glance at a map of Central Africa and its political divisions will show that the Belgian colony is shaped like an enormous bottle with a very narrow neck. All her products should in theory be shipped through this neck. In reality, however, in spite of herculean efforts made by the Belgians to equip the colony adequately, the neck is used only for a very modest amount of trade. The ports of neighbouring colonies deal with a very large amount of the tonnage.

The ore deposits are very scattered and are situated in out-lying districts, facts which do not facilitate the solution of transport problems. Gold is found in the north-east, copper and radium chiefly in the south-east and diamonds in the south-west. Thus a mining concern interested in minerals must bring fuel 620 miles, wood 700 miles and labour 750 miles. Furthermore the deposits do not always lie where the population is densest, most intelligent or most adaptable. These few details serve to illustrate the complicated nature of the difficulties to be solved.

The Belgian geologist, J. Cornet, discovered the Katanga copper belt between 1890 and 1892, and mining was begun in 1906. Tin was discovered in its turn in 1904 in the Lake Albert and Kivu districts. In 1903 gold was found in the Upper Uele basin and workings were begun in 1905. Diamond-mining was started in the Kasai and Louloua regions in 1914. Coal was discovered near Tanganyika and Loualaba. The richest beds are unfortunately far from the industrial centres. In 1923 radium, too, was discovered at Chin Kolmione. About 60 grammes a year are produced. Belgian copper ore is particularly high grade. The percentage of copper content in the ore is:

United States	1-1 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.
Chile	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 per cent.
Rhodesia	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ -4 $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.
Katanga	7-15 per cent.

The workings at Katanga can give an annual output of 250,000 tons. The Rhodo-Katanga production has had a very great influence on the international market, for the United States have lost their previous important position. The Congo

is the world's largest producer of radium and cobalt. She produces 67 per cent. of the world's diamonds and is the fifth largest copper producer (8 per cent. of the world's total) and ranks tenth for tin and twelfth for gold.¹

The water-power potential is estimated at 90,000,000 horse power, that is, one-half of Africa's total. The mining industry has given primary importance to the modernisation of manufacturing processes. Every new scientific discovery is carefully considered and mechanisation of plant, which means economy of labour, has always been encouraged. The newest methods of electrification, lixiviation and electrolysis have been widely adopted.

Industrialisation soon overstepped the barriers between production of raw materials and manufactured goods. The Congo is only in the early stages of its expansion. It possesses hydro-electric power stations, cement factories, collieries and lime-kilns, and also cloth mills, cold storage plants, breweries, flour mills and workshops of all kinds.

It must, however, not be forgotten that the Congo, after passing at first through a short and illusory period of prosperity, was very quickly to suffer from the lack of balance between her industrial activities—connected at the beginning mainly with mining—and her agricultural development. The Congo is, at present, actively engaged in endeavouring to find a solution to the problem of harmonising her varied products. Such adaptation is not without its difficulties. It requires the change-over from conditions which those who upheld a return to an advanced system of *Raubwirtschaft* would like to see continue. It must, of necessity, bring conflicting interests to the fore and can even result in ideological disputes.

Some people, though no convincing proof is submitted, consider that industrialisation must of necessity exclude agricultural activities and *vice versa*. Our personal opinion is that this belief is too dogmatic. It must, however, be admitted that a clash of interests affects not only natural riches but also the native population without whom the most valuable deposits, the strongest

¹ These figures are based on data prior to 1938. Since then comparative figures may have slightly changed.

natural power and the most fertile land are quite worthless. The struggle centres round the native who often against his own will and irrespective of any advantages to be gained is placed on the labour market. He can work either as an industrial or agricultural employee in European undertakings or else on his own account. The development of the native should be encouraged. It is a difficult question to solve and one which cannot be settled by arbitrary opinions. Neither can it be treated lightly. It has arisen before in many other colonies and has not yet received in every case satisfactory solution. If the colonial Powers were to observe the pact which binds them in loyalty to the natives, progressive development should automatically ensue. The framework of native institutions should be respected, but the powers in authority should have the courage to do away with such native customs as are antiquated or barbarous or an obstacle to the development desired.

With this end in view, the Belgian authorities adopted a policy of compulsory cotton cultivation, which had already been introduced in Uganda. This particular problem will be mentioned again later. A balance between industry and agriculture is essential both from cultural as well as economic points of view.

It is towards this end that the efforts of the administration are tending. These efforts are sincere and carefully considered. In his address to the Senate in 1936, when he was still Crown Prince, the present King described in detail the aims to be achieved.

But this generous policy has to overcome many obstacles ; the rapidity of industrialisation is one of them. Habits and customs adopted during the easy period are opposed to progress. The opponents of the idea of native peasantry spring not only from those who have actual interest in preventing such developments, but also from those who are merely too lazy to take any action. The apathy of the native population is, perhaps, the biggest difficulty of all. Some feel nothing but the greatest scorn for the black, considering him only as a stupid, soulless instrument for the development of the colony. Others strongly uphold the status of the black by showing loud sympathy, but nevertheless

fail to take the necessary action to obtain his emancipation. Others again, and these are not the least dangerous, idealise the black and lead themselves to believe that he has a monopoly of all virtues.

States whose economy depends upon one single product, or upon a very small number of products, have to suffer sudden changes from depression to prosperity which coincide sometimes with political changes. Countries such as Brazil with her coffee, Jamaica with her bananas, Cuba with her sugar, have to face difficulties of a very special kind completely unknown to nations whose economy is many-sided.

During boom periods capitalism, or more correctly the investor, who very stupidly places his savings in such affairs, fascinated by the mirage of new countries, starts off imprudently along the dangerous road of over-capitalisation, the painful liquidation of which always results in the destruction of means of production, the ruin of public investments and the disorganisation of state finances. Even the balancing of the Budget can be threatened.

The Belgian Congo has, however, made very encouraging progress towards reaching economic balance. This can even be seen in the production of crops where the previous careless gathering is slowly being replaced by methods of rational culture, and extensive development is giving place to intensive cultivation.

The Congo produces cotton, nuts, palm oil, coffee, sugar cane, cocoa, sisal, peanuts, wood, rubber, etc. In 1938, when the export totals in mining production and raw materials were dropping, the total of cultivated produce increased by 35 per cent. The following figures, if viewed cautiously and critically, will help to show the curve of development in the desired direction.

In 1938 there were 421,538 wage-earning natives out of a population of 10,304,084. This labour was divided as follows :

- 55.6 per cent. in industry.
- 9.8 per cent. in commerce.
- 34.6 per cent. in agriculture.

Under European influence the land under cultivation covered about 370,660 acres, whereas the native cultivation of cotton

covered 887,940 acres, to which must be added 29,650 acres of "clavis."

It is obvious that this comparison in acres is very helpful in drawing conclusions. In point of fact, the 370,660 acres under European cultivation are used for mixed crops, the specific value of which differs considerably from that of cotton. Products such as coffee, cocoa, palm produce and hevea have very different superficial yields. As far as cotton is concerned the yield is far from having reached that of Egypt and America, equalling only one-eighth of the former and one-third of the latter. Great efforts have been made with the help of scientific methods of selection to increase the length of the fibres, but it is well known that plant selection requires both time and patience.

The following statistics relevant to the breeding of livestock show that the Congo has :

- 141,279 cattle belonging to Europeans.
- 242,980 cattle belonging to natives.
- 12,041 pigs belonging to Europeans.
- 130,921 pigs belonging to natives.

Here, too, the question of quality must be borne in mind when considering these figures.

IV

NATIVE PEASANTRY

THE foregoing particulars lead to the consideration of what has been done to create a native peasantry. It is a question which has given rise to much controversy and will probably continue to do so.

The Governor-General, Monsieur Rijkmans, expressed his views very frankly in the report he addressed to the Government Council in June 1939. Speaking on the question of economic liberty for the blacks he said :

“ This freedom will not be a reality, if the Government assumes any responsibility, though nominal only, towards European undertakings, for the provision of labour.

“ This freedom will not be a reality, if the natives, confined to reserves, have an insufficient area of arable land at their disposal.

“ This freedom will not be a reality, if the natives, though amply supplied with land, have not the means at their disposal, without recourse to wage-earning, to obtain sufficient from it to meet their needs and hopes.

“ Finally this freedom will be but a meaningless word if the natives, when given the opportunity of developing their ancestral land, refrain in practice from cultivating it.

“ In other words, to put it bluntly—if it is tacitly understood between the administration and European concerns that a concession of land or mines implies the provision of the necessary labour, means would always be found to provide such labour somehow or another, whether the natives were willing or not, whether the law upholds the freedom of labour or not.

“ If the natives are confined to their reserves as is the case in certain colonies they would have to leave them willy-nilly to work for the whites.

“ If the natives, brought into contact with the white man's material improvements and wishing to enjoy such advantages,

were unable to earn sufficient money among their own people they would have no other choice but to look for paid employment.

“ Lastly, if the natives were left perfectly free to choose between idling away their time on their own land and working in camps, and were to choose the first expedient, the idling would not last long. We need have no illusions on this point. Their land would not be allowed to lie fallow, for if it lay fallow they would lose both their land and their liberty.”

The aim in view, however, an attempt to create a native peasantry, is a very complicated one. The native is to be made into a free and independent smallholder. His capacity as a rate-payer is to be increased. He is to be linked to the soil. The accumulation of native capital is to be encouraged. One difficulty immediately arises: the local system governing real estate. Here the customary rules of the native may conflict with those of the European holders of land, but there is no need for the introduction into native law of European ideas of real estate. The important thing is for the native to have security of tenure. This difficulty in any event is not one of the most serious. Another, less simple of solution, immediately comes to the fore. If the native were to secure more than formal freedom, that is to say, if he were to become an independent social element, he would be subject to compulsory employment. It is nevertheless worth while to see to what extent he can escape economic pressure, forcing him to hire out his working power. He may possibly escape industrial employment, but there is less likelihood of his avoiding employment as an agricultural labourer. Unless the nature of his agricultural work as an independent smallholder is incompatible with any other outside activity under an employer, it is not unlikely that, as in Belgium, a mixed social class may come into being, passing alternatively from independent producer to wage-earner. This kind of agricultural labourer is extremely common in Europe.

To link the native to the soil, it is not sufficient to direct his interest to seasonal crops, which he could view in the light of natural harvesting. He must be taught long-term farming, to deal with different crops giving different yields. A radical

transformation of this kind leads to another ; foresight is not one of the virtues of the native mentality. Furthermore native cultivation would require technical guidance of some sort. For this purpose the colony has trained agriculturalists, selection centres and experimental stations.

Native capital at first only appears in the form of permanent capital for investment. Circulating capital only comes into being as the market turnover expands. Apart from the normal marketing centres generally numbering about a thousand inhabitants, the native's purchasing power remains low. It is therefore essential for the native peasant to produce commodities suitable for export so that he can enter the international exchange market. This is where the white man will still have to serve for a long time as intermediary between the native producer and the outside market.

This was one of the arguments brought forward to justify the system of compulsory cotton cultivation. By this system the country is divided into cotton zones. In each a person granted a concession by the colony has the right to purchase all cotton produced by the natives in that zone. This monopoly, however, is subject to two restrictions : the price is fixed by the Administration ; the concession holder is not only given the opportunity, but is under an obligation to buy the whole of the cotton produced.

This system has, needless to say, been criticised. Its basic obligation is the payment of a tax by the native, but defenders of the system call attention to the result it has produced. The purchasing power of the native has increased. Furthermore, and this argument cannot be ignored, the monopoly protects the native grower from the greedy attentions of middlemen, usually Asiatics, who exploit the blacks in a scandalous fashion.

Nevertheless the opponents of the system ask whether compulsory cultivation in its present form is not contrary to the regulations, which forbid forcing the native to work for private interests. Yet the number of working days the native tax represents is negligible.



A BELGIAN PLANTATION OF HEVEA (PARA) RUBBER TREES.



A SQUAD OF WELL-EQUIPPED BELGIAN NATIVE TROOPS TRAINING WITH THEIR STOKES GUN.



BELGIAN NATIVE TROOPS HAVE SCORED NOTABLE SUCCESSES FOR THE ALLIES
—TRENCH MORTAR CREWS AT PRACTICE.



AN ATTACK THROUGH THE BUSH—SEE THE NOTE ON THE EAST AFRICAN
CAMPAIGN (page 49).

V

WHITE SETTLEMENT

IN a new country there is barely time to solve one problem before another crops up. The question of white settlement in the Congo has aroused the most lively controversy, the more especially as it has both social and economic aspects.

The idea of settling whites in great numbers in Central Africa is at first sight very attractive. Campaigns with this end in view come in cycles. They occur at periods of acute economic crisis with their wretched and interminable procession of unemployed. Some enthusiasts even envisaged six million Europeans in the Congo within a few decades. Reality has so far proved very different. In actual fact barely 1 per cent. of the white population work in the Congo, the rest leading an independent existence. Those who work are employees of one kind or another and when the last economic crisis swept over the world nearly half of them had to return to Europe.

It is a fact that whites do not settle in the Congo. Those who go there permanently constitute an infinitesimal minority. Experience has not proved that settlers can found families and take root even in the most favourable spots. A district such as Kivu, for instance, where the climate is very healthy, has not kept the promises expected of it. White colonisation would seem possible only in this latter region, in the Ituri district and on the high Katanga tableland. Experiments have already been made. They were all failures. In the Congo, factors causing physical deterioration exist which affect even the natives to a certain extent. It is not the extreme heat that is harmful to normal physiological development, but the dampness which gives ideal breeding conditions for germs. Even on the plateau physical deterioration is not unknown. Solar radiations cause lung troubles, and malaria is prevalent at an altitude of 6,600 feet, and the soil is insufficient in calcium and phosphorus.

A colonist, to be prosperous, needs fertile soil, a market for his products, means of transport for their disposal, and a native

population with a certain purchasing power. It is impossible to envisage white settlement, even were all other obstacles removed, unless state intervention procured the ground and arranged for the necessary equipment, tools, living quarters and clearing of the land. Such intervention is not impossible, but how far would the concession of such arable land reopen the land problem between the whites and the blacks?

Ten thousand white colonists, a modest figure and one which certainly does not solve the difficult question of unemployment, would each require 247 acres, making nearly two and a half million acres in all. To obtain any results from his land, each colonist would need the help of at least twenty natives which would bring the number of employees up to 600,000 or more, whereas the difficulty experienced in recruiting 420,000 has already been mentioned. This argument does not discourage the partisans of colonisation by whites. Coolie labour is suggested. It is doubtful whether such a solution would help the already delicate situation now existing between the ethnical groups of different origin.

Lastly, the colonists would have to compete with other Europeans and Asiatics, whose standard of living is very low indeed. The dangers of creating a white proletariat are obvious. It is easy to understand why no Belgian Minister for the Colonies has yet been found prepared to encourage so hazardous an enterprise.

The late Monsieur Rubbens (in an article in *L'Essor du Congo*, 15/4/36) expressed the opinion that only a few hundred white colonists could safely settle in the Congo. At that time 80 per cent. of the requests, which were few, came from ex-colonists. The same Minister declared in January 1936 that natives should not be transferred to regions where they are able to do the work normally undertaken by whites.

This point of view, from which Belgian colonial policy has never deviated, clearly shows a desire to avoid introducing the "colour bar" in the Belgian colonies.

It cannot be claimed that the economic system of "trade for all," as adopted in the Congo basin and most other mandated colonies, offers a very satisfactory starting-point for the building

of a new world based on the economic solidarity of free peoples, but it may well constitute an important element. Everyone knows now that this active co-operation between a large number of countries can only be practicable if each of the parties concerned is ready from the start to make sacrifices. The transformation of a world economic system based on vested interests and protectionism into another completely different would demand radical changes. Such changes would run counter to private interests. Will the democracies be sufficiently energetic to make them give way to the common interest?

It is difficult, too, to believe in the success of such an organisation, if each country were jealously to guard its individual sovereignty. Recent developments, however, in the colonial problem have suggested a new idea for the administration of tropical territories: that such administration be under special control. After the severe setbacks experienced practically everywhere, it is doubtful whether any agreement could be reached regarding "the internationalisation" of colonies. Yet the control exercised by the League of Nations over the mandatory powers which were entrusted with the administration of the former German possessions respects the particular colonial policy of each different power. This control takes the form of restricting their sovereignty. It would seem that this is in no way an obstruction to the normal activity of the responsible powers. As far as Belgium is concerned, it is interesting to note that the mandate she holds for the Randa-Urundi region was conferred on her by the joint Allied Powers, that is to say, the United States figured amongst them. No one believes that economic order can be re-established in the world without the active participation of America. It is in the common interest to seek every opportunity of bringing the United States into such a system.

Competition between producers does not exist only in the economic sphere. Social factors enter more and more into the calculation of cost prices. Protectionism is often the result of political factors; out-and-out nationalism results of necessity in protectionism and *vice versa*. Another cause of protectionism, also of political origin, is the desire to augment the military

potential of each nation. Each one wishes to possess similar means and opportunities to the other. Hence the foundation of artificial war industries which would not exist without protection, but protectionism often contrives to justify itself by quoting the inequality of the standard of living of workers producing the same raw materials and the same foodstuffs in different parts of the world. Social legislation has not made equal progress everywhere. The sacrifices demanded either from the state or from employers are not everywhere the same. As a result cost prices are unequally burdened. Considerable efforts have already been made to bring working conditions into line. The numerous international conventions and recommendations of the International Labour Office have done much in this way, but success is still far off. Belgium has the honour to be among those countries which has ratified the greatest number of these protective labour agreements. It has, however, to be admitted that the colonial Powers, Belgium included, have not shown the same zeal in sanctioning the conventions in the natives' interests.

The colonising power of European states is in direct proportion to the measure of native emancipation. The organisation of a new world cannot neglect the social factor.

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONGO ECONOMY

THE full development of the Congo's natural wealth could not be achieved without adequate means of transport.

In 1898 the Matadi-Leopoldville Railway was opened. It took eight and a half years to construct. It was at that time a daring feat. Since then the line has been much improved. Other tracks have been laid and the Belgian Government now has a very comprehensive railway system.¹

Nevertheless, the import and export trade is not carried solely by rail nor through the colony's port, as an appreciable amount goes through neighbouring territories. Although the Congo is one of the longest rivers in the world it has many cataracts. There are a number of places where it is necessary to unload, which causes a considerable increase in cost prices.

The roads in the Congo win the admiration of all who have crossed Africa. They are by far the best in that part of the Continent.² Air transport, too, is very well organised.³

	Miles
¹ Boma-Tshela (Mayumbe)	86
Stanleyville-Ponthierville	78
Kindu-Kongolo	223
Kabalo-Albertville (Lake Tanganyika)	170
Katanga-Bukama	446
Bukama-Port Francqui	702
Aketi-Bondo	95
Charlesville-Makumbi	56
Manono-Mayumba	32

² The Congo has 8,200 miles of waterways (for vessels of sixty tons) and 47,200 miles of roads.

³ In 1938 SABENA (the Belgian Airways Company) carried 1,113 travellers between Belgium and the Congo and back, 1,744 travellers to the interior of the colony.

The goods carried amounted to :

19,700 tons of mail (Belgian Congo),
38,400 tons of mail (internal traffic),
13,850 tons of goods (Belgian Congo),
23,500 tons of goods (internal traffic),

and the planes covered 421,841 miles (Belgian Congo) ; 170,260 miles (internal traffic).

In the Budget, as a whole, the loan figures are as follows (Financial year 1934-35):

Tanganyika	6.2 per cent.
Uganda	8.3 " "
Gold Coast	4.3 " "
Nigeria	16.7 " "
Algeria	25 " "
Morocco	24.5 " "
Ruanda-Urundi	23.4 " "
Belgian Congo	44.3 " "

The total of invested capital per head is also much higher than in Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika. This peculiarity can partly be explained by the fact that Belgian capitalists, although active in other parts of the world (for example, in the Dutch East Indies), have concentrated their attention on colonial territory consisting of one single block. Concentration of capital is a universal phenomenon, but it is more marked in the colonies than in the metropolitan countries. The Belgian Congo has not escaped it. Such concentration presents certain difficulties and possibilities. Both are sufficiently familiar. Concentration of funds permits of quicker and more intensive development of natural resources and enables greater quantities of products to be put on the international market. Even in the business sphere large multiple firms can have more modern equipment, so that their output is vastly greater than that of small scattered concerns whose resources are limited. On the other hand, however, this concentration of vast means of production may have the most disturbing results. Public officials soon manifest a tendency to shift responsibilities, resulting in general confusion. Their true independence is continually threatened. The power of the big trusts is sometimes used behind the scenes against the public interest.

It was thought that a remedy had been found for this by the adoption of a policy of mixed economy. The State often holds 51 per cent. of the shares of big companies. Thenceforward State control seems, theoretically speaking, assured, but in practice this is not always the case. The efficiency of this supervision

depends to a large extent on the strength of character of the State officials on the administrative Councils. Their true independence depends on a number of circumstances which the large companies are only too ready to turn to their own advantage.

The State, too, legitimately obtains a return from financial commitments. At any moment it may be confronted with a choice between its financial interests and moral obligations. The latter demand the unquestioned application of the protective legislation of the natives. It is to the honour of Belgian colonial officials that they have never failed to carry out their duties to the full.

In 1932 the Congo's exports amounted to 1 milliard 897 million francs in value and her imports 1 milliard 22 million francs. Belgium takes 73.79 per cent. of the Congo's exports and supplies the Congo with 43.83 per cent. of her needs. If these figures, however, are compared with Belgium's export and import totals it can be seen that the Congo plays only a very modest part in her general trade.¹

In short the economy of the Congo can be described as follows:

The widespread indiscriminate participation of nations of all countries in the creation and administration of business undertakings, a result of the "Trade for All" system;

The frequent intervention by the State to guarantee interest, fixed prices, give support in the open market and participate financially in private firms;

The concentration of capital with its accompanying advantages and disadvantages, including dangers of over-capitalisation which the small investor has had to pay for dearly;

A tendency towards balance between industrial and agricultural productions;

A sincere desire to help the economic development of the natives, while respecting their rights and customs.

¹ In 1938 Belgium's imports valued 23 milliard 166 million francs, her exports 21 milliard 723 million francs. Thus the Congo only accounts for 2-3 per cent. of Belgium's total trade.

VII
SOCIAL POLICY

THE civilising influence of a colonial Power should not be judged by her economic but by her social policy. In fact, the avowed object of colonisation is native emancipation. Economic development can help towards this end, but its results may be absolutely the opposite: the destruction of the race. There are well-known examples to be found in overseas history.

Not a single country, when beginning colonisation, can escape passing through a certain phase which is generally to its discredit. Fifty years ago the Belgian Congo was in that position. Her social policy at the start was not exactly a model one. Public opinion and more rational approach to the labour problem, however, have righted these deplorable faults and outrageous cruelties which could hardly be said to justify the high opinion held of itself by the white race.

The conquest of America by the Spaniards was one long story of treachery and crime. The natives were practically exterminated. It is barely 150 years (1792) since Denmark, the first to act in the matter, prohibited her subjects from taking part in the slave trade. Until then traffic in slaves was carried on with a ferocity little flattering to humanity. In the course of a century, from 1680 to 1786, the number of blacks transported from British possessions in Africa reached 2,130,000. Jamaica absorbed 6,010,000 in 80 years. At the end of the eighteenth century, 70,000 slaves were exported every year to America, half of them by the English.¹

It can well be imagined how dreadful this traffic was. On board ship they were crowded together like cattle, shackled with chains, badly fed, without water, sanitation or medical care, exposed to the burning sun, covered with sores and ulcers, whipped and branded; these unfortunate blacks were thrown overboard if the slave traders were pursued by ships of inspection.

¹ Dr. Robert Brown, *The Story of Africa*. Edition, Cassell & Co., 1894.

While the International Commission of Investigation was starting its enquiries into the Independent State of the Congo in 1904, the Germans were brutally putting down the revolt of the Herreros in South-West Africa; 100,000 natives were massacred. The proclamation issued by the German General von Troha has remained sadly famous. The most significant passage reads "The Herreros must leave the country. If they do not I shall compel them to at the point of a gun. Every Herrero, armed or unarmed, found within the German frontiers, with or without cattle, will be shot. I shall take no prisoners, neither women nor children." It is difficult to know which to admire most; the barbarity of the action or the stupid want of foresight in depopulating a region whose wealth requires labour for its

ERRATUM

Page 31, para. 2, lines 7 and 8, should read: Consider, for example, Multatuli's eloquent indictment of Dutch colonial methods and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

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It is, in fact, unnecessary to go farther afield than Europe to find examples of the terrible consequences of the introduction of machinery and capitalist trading, without adequate social legislation. No one has yet forgotten the appalling position of the working classes in the big industrial countries of Europe: the employment of women and children, the truck system, infantile mortality, the buying and selling of children, terrible living conditions and excessively long hours of work. But the excesses committed in the colonies will never equal the premeditated cruelty of the massacres perpetrated by Hitler in the European countries he has conquered, for example, in Warsaw and Rotterdam. In the Independent Congo State ivory and rubber were gathered under conditions indefensible both from the humane

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In 1905 the revolt of the Maji-Maji in South-East Africa was successfully suppressed at the cost of 125,000 native lives. The Charter Companies have not left any more pleasing memories; the troubles of the British South Africa Company ended in a disastrous balance sheet. Literature has preserved some of the protests raised by the conscience of humanity against such excesses. Consider, for example, Multatuli's eloquent indictment in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of Dutch colonial methods. The French have no more claim than the Portuguese to congratulation on their conduct towards blacks, least of all at the beginning of the period of Imperialist expansion.

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and economic view points, yet at the same time Belgian officers belonging to this same Independent State were delivering the natives of Bar-El-Ghazal from the tyranny of the Dhervishes. Disconcerting contradictions are often to be found in a history full of contrasts.

A number of well-known Belgians added their protests to those of Fox-Bourne, F. D. Morel and Roger Casement. Amongst those associated with this campaign, which resulted in the creation of the Commission of Investigation, some were moved by humanitarian motives alone.

Fortunately for Belgium's reputation she firmly repudiated the previous cruel methods when she annexed the Congo.

From the social aspect, the Belgian Congo to-day can be favourably compared with many other colonies of considerably longer standing.

Social science in the colonies has three main objects: to fight disease, to combat ignorance, to overcome the natural apathy of the natives.

VIII

THE LABOUR QUESTION

THIS question is a particularly delicate one. The Colonial Charter drawn up at the time of the taking over of the Independent Congo State shows traces of the great change of Belgium's colonial policy not only in the economic but even more markedly in the social sphere. The Charter specifically decrees that "no one can be forced to work for private individuals or for companies." There is, however, a vast difference between formal prohibition of forced labour and its abolition in practice. The administrative authorities of the Belgian Congo have never had any illusions on this point. This is why numerous precautions have been taken to avoid any form, no matter how indirect, of forced labour. The laws concerning native labour have been drawn up in the most minute detail. It is surprising, therefore, that since the Belgian system is far more liberal in every way, Belgium has not yet ratified the International Convention of June 28th, 1930, concerning forced labour, although Australia, England, France and Italy have done so.

The number of wage-earners in the Congo has risen to 421,538 out of a population, according to the last census, of 10,304,084 inhabitants. This figure may at first appear somewhat small. It is certainly far below the high percentage of older industrial countries. The reason lies in this very essential difference: Belgium is an industrial country of ancient tradition. The individual who becomes an employee suffers a less radical change than the native dragged from the bush to be dropped down in front of a furnace with all the implicit hardships of industrial work, such as strict discipline, monotony and the need for strained and prolonged concentration, and these 420,000 labourers as often as not work in completely different surroundings from those to which they are accustomed, and it must not be forgotten that the black is much more subject to home-sickness than is generally thought.

Development of transport facilities has done much to improve

the natives' position. They had previously been made to carry back-breaking loads as porters. Long treks across areas subject to extremely great climatic changes resulted in the spreading of epidemics such as sleepy sickness, syphilis and blennorrhagia. The mixing of races had a disruptive effect on native customs and a very harmful influence on the religious spirit of the blacks, whose rites were either ridiculed or disturbed, with social anarchy as a result.

It has been shown that labour had often to be recruited from great distances, 750 or 800 miles or more. In spite of the precautions taken, a too-intensive recruiting of labour may be a great danger to a native community. Some areas have had to be completely closed to recruiting for a period of several years. State officials are forbidden to help in the recruiting of manual labour. Whole economic zones have to be closed as regards the granting of industrial and agricultural concessions. It was previously the practice to pay native chiefs a premium for each labourer recruited. This was a detestable system, the result being a mass exodus of natives to neighbouring colonies. It has been abolished and replaced by another. Whether this is any better seems open to doubt. The recruiting premium is now paid into the coffers of the native tribe, instead of to the chief himself. The problem may perhaps, by this means, have been shifted, but it has not been solved.

The administration had the courage to tackle this difficulty right in the middle of a boom period. The Commission for native labour held an enquiry, which ended in 1925 by fixing the recruiting figures as follows :

(a) 5 per cent. adult males in good health to be recruited from any community for work far from their homes ;

(b) 5 per cent. more to be recruited for work at two days' walking distance from their homes ;

(c) 5 per cent. more, making a total of 15 per cent., to be recruited for work in the immediate neighbourhood of their villages.

These figures are not, of course, rigidly adhered to, neither are they always reached. In certain cases, after due investigation, they may be exceeded. More often than not in practice this

latter method is used. In 1930, however, the total percentage was reduced to ten.

Civil servants have also been forbidden to enter the service of any private business or firm and to accompany the recruiting officers on their travels.

On June 18th, 1930, a new decree was passed, incorporating some very strict regulations concerning the migration of labour. The decree gives the minimum standards required, especially as regards feeding, housing and medical services ; the same decree stipulates that every group of twenty-five recruited workers must be accompanied by an overseer. It is forbidden to make them go on foot if either river or rail transport is available for the journey. If no transport is available, camps must be pitched at the end of every twenty miles covered.

It will be noted that economic influence is playing a more important part in present-day recruiting, while the head money is dwindling in importance. In the Belgian Congo the penalties for breaking a work contract are very rarely enforced. The Belgian delegates at the International Labour Conference held at Geneva in 1939 were in favour of its abolition. The application of the recruiting laws passes through alternate periods of strictness and slackness, which usually coincide with phases of economic depression and prosperity.

The fact that the colony has financial interests in the big business concerns does not make any difference in the matter, as the State may be both a judge and an interested party. It is, however, unfair to place the State in this unenviably equivocal position.

IX

HEALTH SERVICES

UNTIL quite recently the native population had shown a distressing tendency to decrease. At the moment, however, it is on the increase, the rise between 1937 and 1938 being 86,676. Of the 10,304,384 inhabitants 4,041,296, quite a high percentage, are children.

The network of social services is one of the most widespread in Africa, if not the most, and the results of the medical work are most encouraging. In 1938 the number of natives examined by the colony's various health services reached 5,034,331—half the total population. It is an impressive figure, more especially when compared with the small staff undertaking the task. There are exactly 198 doctors in the Congo, including helpers from the Missions and Red Cross, plus a few dentists and four or five hundred sanitary inspectors and white nurses, to whom must be added 2,000 trained native assistants. When it is remembered that the Congo is eighty times the size of Belgium, that modern means of transport are not everywhere available, and that the people are very prejudiced, some idea can be gained of the vastness of this humanitarian undertaking.

The development of the practice of preventive medicine is unique. In this respect the Belgian Congo is far more advanced than the British and French territories. It is not all due, however, to State organisations. Private initiative has played a large part. The work done is approved and sometimes subsidised by the State. This is so in the case of hospitals, etc., belonging to the missions or to industrial, commercial or agricultural concerns. The latter are in any case compelled by law to provide medical services and prophylactic hygiene.

When I visited the Congo I was able to confirm that the work had been accomplished with intelligence and kindness commensurate with the immensity of the task. Praise for business concerns connected with this work should not be stinted, although pessimistic people have accused them of acting more

in their own interests than those of humanity, maintaining that they only protect the natives with such care because they have a pressing need of labour. What if this be true! It is surely all to the good if economic needs can coincide with social requirements and have such excellent results.

I can personally vouch for the devotion, zeal, enthusiasm and self-sacrifice of all those, whether officials, missionaries or employees of private firms, who have dedicated themselves to this task. The struggle against sleepy sickness, tuberculosis, syphilis, frambœsia and leprosy demands special equipment which has to be distributed over an exceptionally vast area, including hospitals, urban and rural dispensaries, medical missions, maternity clinics, midwifery training schools, etc.

There are several institutions in the Congo unlike any others to be found in the colonies. "Foreami" (Queen Elizabeth Foundation for Medical Aid for Natives) is one of these. It works in collaboration with the administration, but is responsible for a large part of the work. The "Foreami" started in 1930 with a capital of 150,000,000 francs, 100,000,000 of which came from the Congo Government and 50,000,000 from the Belgian Government. Its aims are to combat disease; to build hospitals, dispensaries, roads, etc. It proceeds by regional stages. It began with the Lower Congo and worked thence to the Kwango district. Once an area has been equipped, the "Foreami" leaves further work to the care of the State, which can carry on with a smaller staff and at less expense. The advantage of this method is that this humanitarian work is not slowed down by lack of funds. A similar institution has been founded by the Catholic missions. That is the "Sadami" (Auxiliary Service for Medical Care of Natives). Praise must also be given to the Protestant missions for their persevering work. As for the Red Cross, it has, until quite recently, been concentrating its efforts in the Uelle territories. It is well known that the reputation the Belgian and Congo Red Cross enjoys has spread far beyond the frontiers of Belgium and the Congo.

The medical service absorbs 10 per cent. of the colony's budget, a proportion rarely reached in other colonies. Although they are always complaining of the lack of means at their disposal,

the scientists in charge of these health services are far-sighted and their complaints make their efficiency and foresight the more evident. There are four research laboratories at Leopoldville, Coquihatville, Stanleyville and Elizabethville. The one I visited was more spacious and better equipped than many of the shabby laboratories dependent on the Department of Public Health in Brussels. The Institute of Tropical Medicines at Antwerp, however, is an achievement of which Belgium can be proud.

A writer¹ who does not mince words when criticising colonial policy has admitted that in the Belgian Congo medical care and the sanitary conditions in the villages are better than anywhere else in that part of Africa.

¹ Negley Farson, *Behind God's Back* (p. 341). Gollancz, London, 1940.

X

EDUCATION

THE educational system in the Belgian Congo is guided by three principles :

to foster the spirit of religion ;
to avoid turning the natives into substitute Europeans ;
to eliminate all threat of the " colour-bar."

The Catholic missions exercised a preponderant influence on the teaching sphere in the Congo, so that the Protestant missions complained.¹

Other residents have also claimed purely secular education for their children. It must not be forgotten that there are 4,414 white children in the Belgian colony, whose parents do not necessarily practise any of the creeds having the monopoly of education.

The religious fact is, in any event, tacitly recognised, at least for the natives, as a determining educational factor. The British Colonial Office in its Memorandum of 1925 officially stressed the importance of this factor in the education of primitive peoples. In spite of a few elementary pedagogic blunders, teaching in the

¹ Nevertheless, statistics relevant to teaching, though incomplete and badly arranged, show that 240,000 pupils attend unsubsidised schools for natives (those opened by Belgian missions and probably nearly all Catholic).

262,000 pupils are registered at unsubsidised schools organised by other means (probably almost all Protestant).

There are 2,902 Catholic missionaries belonging to 84 different Orders and 830 Protestant missionaries belonging to 43 different Orders. The proportion, therefore, seems to be fair enough. This, however, is not the case, for 219,430 natives attend subsidised schools, making a total of 720,000 native children in primary schools, which number 4,212 without counting the members of high schools and business, domestic and teachers' training colleges. The anomaly is explained by the fact that to be subsidised two-thirds of the staff of the school must be Belgian. Protestants are generally of other nationality and have therefore little chance of receiving financial help from the State.

Congo is based in general on the following lines : to leave the native in his own surroundings, to avoid uprooting him or incorporating him by force into a Western civilisation which is foreign to him and must of necessity remain so. Instruction given tries to ensure the full development of the native within the sphere of his own economic and social surroundings instead of producing a caricature of a European.

The big business concerns have also taken the initiative by opening technical schools where the natives are taught trades from which they are excluded in places where the "colour-bar" is acute. They are trained as chauffeurs, artisans, carpenters, metal workers, locomotive workers, etc.

I should like also to mention the interesting venture of the Albert National Park. The idea was originated by the naturalist, Carl Akeley, who conceived the project in 1925 whilst on an expedition to Lake Kivu, where he went to study the gorillas. At his suggestion a vast tract of land covering 75,215 acres was reserved, right in the heart of Africa. The object is to preserve a biological nucleus in its primitive state, eliminating all human influences. This scientific reservation is of the greatest interest for the study of natural flora and fauna. It is a unique spot hardly affected at all by contact with Western civilisation. Hunting is naturally forbidden. Some people, however, consider that it is too drastically cut off from human influence since the environment in which the animals and plants live implies the presence of human beings. In any event this reservation in the region of the Great Lakes, at the foot of the chain of Great African volcanoes far removed from all normal traffic and inhabited by pigmies, shows praiseworthy foresight on the part of those responsible for its creation. Its founder, Carl Akeley, is buried in this Park, which owes its existence to him.

GERMAN COLONIAL DEMANDS

THE opinions expressed on white settlement in the Congo all lead to the examination of a problem of great topical interest. Every time Hitler was preparing to seize the territory of a state to which he had promised protection he invariably repeated that his territorial demands in Europe were fully satisfied. To do him justice, however, he has never concealed his intention of claiming the return to Germany of former colonies. These demands were couched in such general terms that it would be unwise to conclude that his desires were limited geographically to former German possessions. His aims being primarily of a strategic nature, his ambitions were certain to turn in quite another direction. German prestige demanded the recovery of absolute sovereignty over the former colonies.

Since the Hitler regime has raised the question of the re-distribution of colonial territories, it has tried to justify its claims by basing German demands on five different arguments :

- (1) The demographic factor.
- (2) Raw materials.
- (3) Markets for finished products.
- (4) Investment of capital.
- (5) The prestige of the Third Reich.

The Belgian Congo, like all colonies belonging to secondary Powers, is more interested than others in the Reich expansionist aspirations. The Belgians are sufficiently astute to know by experience that the strong sometimes satisfy their greed at the expense of the weak. At the present time the declarations made by the head of the British Government are so clear that the Belgians have nothing to fear from that quarter. This they have showed by concluding an economic agreement with Great Britain, in which a perfect understanding has been reached and, as a result, the military resources of the two Allies have been pooled. The

despatch of a detachment to the Sudan gave active form to this desire for full co-operation.

It has been shown that the idea of settling Europeans in Africa proves attractive to many, but in practice difficulties quite unsuspected by the layman have to be overcome. German colonial history goes to prove that the problem is not an easy one to solve—in fact, Germany held complete sovereignty for a long time, almost as long as Belgium, over large possessions. In the German colonies in Africa, however, the most suitable for experiments in white settlement, there were barely 20,000 German subjects before the last war. It is obviously a laughable figure when compared with the 15,000 Germans settled in Belgium. There were 1,600,000 Germans in the United States and a considerable number in Brazil as well. The non-colonial countries, therefore, served as a more generous outlet for the surplus population than the territories under the direct sovereignty of the Reich, where the emigrants met with no kind of obstacle. Since the seizure of tropical Africa by European countries, only 400,000 whites have settled there.

The idea of *Lebensraum* is very much open to debate. The density of population in the home country does not necessarily constitute a satisfactory criterion. The following list gives the comparative density of population in various countries :

Number of inhabitants to the square mile—	
Belgium	728
Denmark	230
England	728
France	207
Germany (1933)	372
Holland	664
Italy	355
Switzerland	266

It will at once be seen that these figures are of theoretical value only. Density of population in Switzerland, for instance, does not correspond at all to the actual conditions, when the vast stretches of country occupied by the mountains are considered. To form a true picture, it would be necessary in every case to

deduct all waste areas, which is in practice impossible. But if these figures are taken as a basis, though imperfect for comparison, it is clear that German claims, if dependent upon such doubtful grounds, do not bear much weight.

The idea that colonies can be of very much use to over-populated countries was abandoned a long time ago by specialists in colonisation. Great Britain, the oldest of the colonial Powers, is an instructive example. Although possessing the largest number of colonies suitable for settlement, Great Britain has always had a considerable number of unemployed who are a heavy burden for the British taxpayer even in times of prosperity. It is difficult to believe that the British people would have consented to face such heavy social burdens if they could have escaped them simply by sending superfluous labour to the colonies.

Is the argument for raw materials any more reasonable? It does not seem to be if the statistics for German foreign trade are examined. Were the return of her former colonies of purely economic interest to her, she would certainly be sadly disillusioned, for the raw materials coming in from German overseas territories before the war represented only a half per cent. of her total imports. Germany certainly needs rubber and copper very badly. Where do they come from? In Africa, from the Belgian Congo and other territories which, by international agreement, are subject to the same "trade for all" system. This implies that no one has a right to preference in the purchase of these basic goods. All mandated territories—at least those under Mandate B—follow the same system. The application of this system is under the control of a national body which is above suspicion, the League of Nations Permanent Committee for Mandated Territories, in the work of which the Germans themselves have taken an active part.

In point of fact, Hitler's claims are protected more by a lack of foreign currency than of raw materials, but here again German reasoning is wrong. Actually only 3 per cent. of the world's raw materials come from the colonies, the rest being produced by the sovereign states, so the argument for foreign exchange fades away. The real truth is that Germany is suffering from the

Hitler regime. Totalitarianism put Germany on the fatal road of economic nationalism. Goods are exchanged for other goods. A country cannot insist upon selling to others, if others are not allowed to sell in their turn to her. Self-sufficiency does not allow for the procuring of currency. One of the most tragic consequences of totalitarian systems of Government is that they are forced irresistibly into making more and more conquests, because they are condemned to asphyxiation by their own doctrine of enclosed nationalism.

Most of the world's petrol, iron, copper, cotton and wool is produced by independent sovereign states. This is not, however, the case with rubber, vegetable oils, graphite, phosphates, quinine (Dutch East Indies) and camphor (Formosa), though the last two products can hardly be put in the category of raw materials.

It would be too cruel to refute the argument of capital investment. As far as Germany is concerned, however, it seems rather a bitter joke. Germany sold more to her former colonies after they were mandated than she did before. These facts revealed by German statistics dispose of the argument for a market. She was able to sell more for the very good reason that the "trade for all" principles apply to exports as well as imports. This principle incidentally has been applied to the Congo Basin ever since the foundation of the Independent State.

The argument for prestige is elusive. It has no basis in fact. It should be remembered, however, that both very large and very small countries have, in the course of history, enjoyed considerable power without the possession of any colonies, for example: the United States, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. This last country has not been any less prosperous or suffered any loss of prestige since she gave up her possessions. The prestige of States does not depend on their territorial area beyond the home country, it depends on their character, their work and, above all, on the place they have acquired in the realms of science, art, literature and especially in their attitude towards international engagements, by their contribution to the creation of an international code which can only be effective if carefully observed by all.

Hitlerism, a candidate for the administration of colonial territories, rejects the monogenic theory accepted by Christians the world over. It preaches a violent doctrine of racial purity in opposition to the idea of the equality of peoples. It is doubtful whether this could be a good qualification for liberal administration and the emancipation of the so-called inferior races.

It must nevertheless be admitted that the problem of circulation and consumption of wealth is far from being solved. Until a solution is found to the satisfaction of the countries concerned, there will always be periodical threats to the peace of the world. It is not a question of political frontiers. The solution is perhaps more likely to be found in the "trade for all" system adopted by the Belgian Congo and certain other colonies. Duties payable on goods are fiscal, as are the charges on business concerns. Belgians are given no preferential treatment, as the statistics for the colony clearly show. Of the 2,285 settlers resident in the Congo, 1,605 are of nationality other than Belgian. Of the 9,204 commercial, industrial and agricultural undertakings, only 4,227 are Belgian owned.

On the eve of war, protectionism was denounced, even by those practising it, as one of the most destructive elements to world peace. Will this new and terrible lesson teach the world wisdom for the future.

CONCLUSION

My intention in publishing the preceding pages has been to give a general idea of Belgium's colonial activities. The picture is certainly incomplete and lacking in detail, but it is an honest and truthful one. Like every great human undertaking, it shows some human failings, and these have not been omitted. I have tried to free myself from such national prejudices as might have biased my judgment, but it is not my intention to write an apologia.

This outline report is intended to show Belgian colonial policy in its true light. Its very great merit lies in having had the courage to admit the mistakes made at a period when not even inexperience could be saddled with the blame. Belgium has gone even further. Far from remaining bowed under the burden of these mistakes, for which she was only in part responsible, she set about correcting them with courage and goodwill. The reforms were carried out thoroughly and rapidly. Are they now complete? It would, I think, be difficult to find another colony similar to the Belgian Congo, where the position is as satisfactory. The Belgium Congo can be favourably compared to any other tropical country.

The colonial Powers have a double mission: to emancipate the natives and to utilise the great national wealth of the tropical regions. The latter object is as legitimate as the former and is a complement to it, though certain people with odd ideas about colonisation consider the two to be incompatible. Of course there are often differences of opinion between those who believe solely in the former object and those who are only animated by a desire for personal gain. The desire for profit as a motive for human action does not only affect production and trade in the colonies; it is as powerful everywhere else and the consequences are the same. Documents as different as the "Communist Manifesto" and the Papal Encyclicals denounce it with equal vehemence. Colonisation as such, therefore, cannot be held responsible for the abuses which exist, for it is only one of the

results of methods of production and trade based on private appropriation of the means of production and the private pursuit of profit.

The colonial experiment which is proceeding under the auspices of Belgium in Central Africa has been associated from the start with nationals of other countries. If the serious problem of the redistribution of raw materials is to be solved on a basis of national co-operation, Belgium is one of the best prepared for such a step.

Those of other nationality who have made a study of Africa are unanimous in agreeing that the advantages of Belgian colonial methods far outnumber the disadvantages.¹ They all agree on the practical and sensitive character of these methods.

Thirty years ago a well-known Englishman, who was not sparing of criticism, wrote the following lines at a time when the violent controversy provoked by the Enquiry Commission of 1904 was still raging. This is the opinion of Sir Harry H. Johnston in *A History of the Colonisation of Africa by Alien Races* (Cambridge University Press, 1912).

"Yet little Belgium has a tremendous task before her in raising this immense territory to the condition of Brazil or Java; and the regret naturally felt by English, German and French writers that this wealthy territory was more or less disdained by the Governments in the days of Cameron's and Stanley's earlier journeys and advertisements of its capabilities, no doubt stimulates on their part a destructive criticism of Belgian efforts and capabilities. It is sometimes hinted that this unwieldy state will not long outlive as a political entity the monarch who founded it, and that its southern provinces will fall to England, its northern to France and its western to Germany. But predictions in regard to the evolution of African history are very uncertain of fulfilment, and the Congo State may yet become and remain a Belgian India."

To this far-seeing statement I should like to add another. The personality of its writer gives it increased value.

On October 8th, 1928, Sir Herbert Samuel who once upon a time conducted a campaign against the Belgian Congo, wrote

¹ Negley Farson, *Behind God's Back*.

the following letter to M. Jaspar, the Belgian Prime Minister and Minister for the Colonies :

“It is nearly twenty-five years since, as a young private member of the British Parliament, keenly interested in African questions, I moved a resolution in the House of Commons drawing attention to grave defects in the administration of the Congo Free State, particularly in relation to the treatment of the natives. There followed an acute public controversy. Those of us who, in England, took a prominent part in that discussion were accused of being animated by some ulterior motive, hostile to Belgian interests and intended to promote, in one way or another, the interests of Great Britain. As a matter of fact, we were only anxious that the Government of the Congo should be transferred from the personal control of King Leopold II to that of the Belgian Crown and Parliament. We felt sure that, if that were done, the abuses would end. We took action because Great Britain had a certain responsibility in the matter by virtue of the international arrangements that were made when the Congo Free State was founded.

“A quarter of a century has gone by. The transfer was effected long ago. On account of the part which I played at that time, I would venture to offer now my respectful congratulations upon the complete change that has been effected and the brilliant results that have been achieved. I have recently made enquiry from the organisation in this country, whose special task it is to keep in close touch with the interests of native populations in all parts of the world, and to bring to public notice any causes of abuse, and I am assured that, for many years past, no complaint has reached it from the Belgian Congo. On the contrary, that State is now regarded as standing in the forefront of progressive and enlightened colonial administrations.

“The recent journey of King Albert and Queen Elizabeth, undertaken with so much courage and devotion, impels me to take up my pen and to offer these words of sincere homage to them and to the Belgian Administration.”

I am convinced that the Belgian Colony will be called upon to play as important a part in peace time as in time of war. The praise given to the present system employed by Belgium has not

been sufficiently intoxicating as to destroy her powers of criticism. This short study of the position shows that clearly. The knowledge gained, the results achieved and the methods adopted must be compared with those of other countries. By so doing the colonial Powers are best able to contribute to the solution of a problem which has done much to disturb the peace of nations, but which could bring them together in mutual understanding. Is this hope, uttered at a moment when total warfare is at its height, nothing but a chimera ?

Postscript

THE ABYSSINIAN CAMPAIGN

THE invasion of Belgium in May 1940 did not immediately involve her in a declaration of war against Italy. But when, at the time of the fall of France, the latter was attacked by Italy, the government in Rome indulged in a series of unfriendly and hostile acts towards Belgium. Our Ambassador was given his passport. Belgian commercial planes which had been retained in North Africa by France were stolen by the Italians. An Italian submarine torpedoed the Belgian steamer *Kabalo* near the Azores. The Italian Air Force occupied the flying fields in Belgium from where they took part in the aerial bombardment of London. Infiltrations of Italian troops were carried out in the direction of the Sudan and Kenya.

Even before the official declaration of war to the Government in Rome, units of the Police Force were moved towards the north-west frontier of our colony.

In November 1940, a state of war was in force. From then on, the movements of our colonial army were carried out in full agreement with the British High Command.

On March 9th, 1941, a military column of Belgian Colonial troops stormed the slopes of Afodu and established itself on the Abyssinian plateau.

Asosa was captured by the Belgian troops on March 11th.

They had crossed a region abounding in natural obstacles and succeeded in carrying out a clever encircling movement.

On March 22nd, the Italian garrison on the river Baro, though strongly entrenched, was unexpectedly attacked and captured by our troops in collaboration with an English company, this operation cutting off the road to the Sudan to the Italians.

At the beginning of July, Belgian troops resumed the offensive, and attacked Saio in Galla Sidamo. By the 4th of that month the strength of this operation was such that the Italian Command asked for cessation of hostilities, then for an armistice. This soon developed into capitulation, and the entire army of General Gassera, comprising 15,000 metropolitan and native troops, surrendered, and a considerable amount of war material was captured by the Belgians.

This brilliant feat of arms resulted in the total occupation by Belgian Colonial forces of all Abyssinian territory south of the Blue Nile.

The Belgian Colonial troops were highly praised by all the English military authorities and by the British Ministry of War.