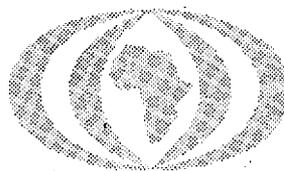


**ZAIRE:
Continuing World Headache**

Jonathan Kapstein

OCCASIONAL PAPER

GELEENTHEIDSPUBLIKASIE



**DIE SUID-AFRIKAANSE INSTITUUT VAN INTERNASIONALE AANGELENTHED
THE SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

Mr Jonathan Kapstein is a graduate of both Brown and Columbia Universities in the United States, and at Columbia he later received a Ford Foundation fellowship for foreign correspondents.

Currently he is Africa editor for Business Week, based in Johannesburg. Previously he also has covered Italy, Canada and Latin America for the magazine, and he won the Overseas Press Club of America's annual award for the best reporting from Latin America. Mr Kapstein is also a Lieutenant-Commander in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

This paper is based on a talk given at Jan Smuts House on 21 May 1980, following Mr Kapstein's return from a visit through Zaire.

It should be noted that any opinions expressed in this article are the responsibility of the author and not of the Institute.

ZAIRE:

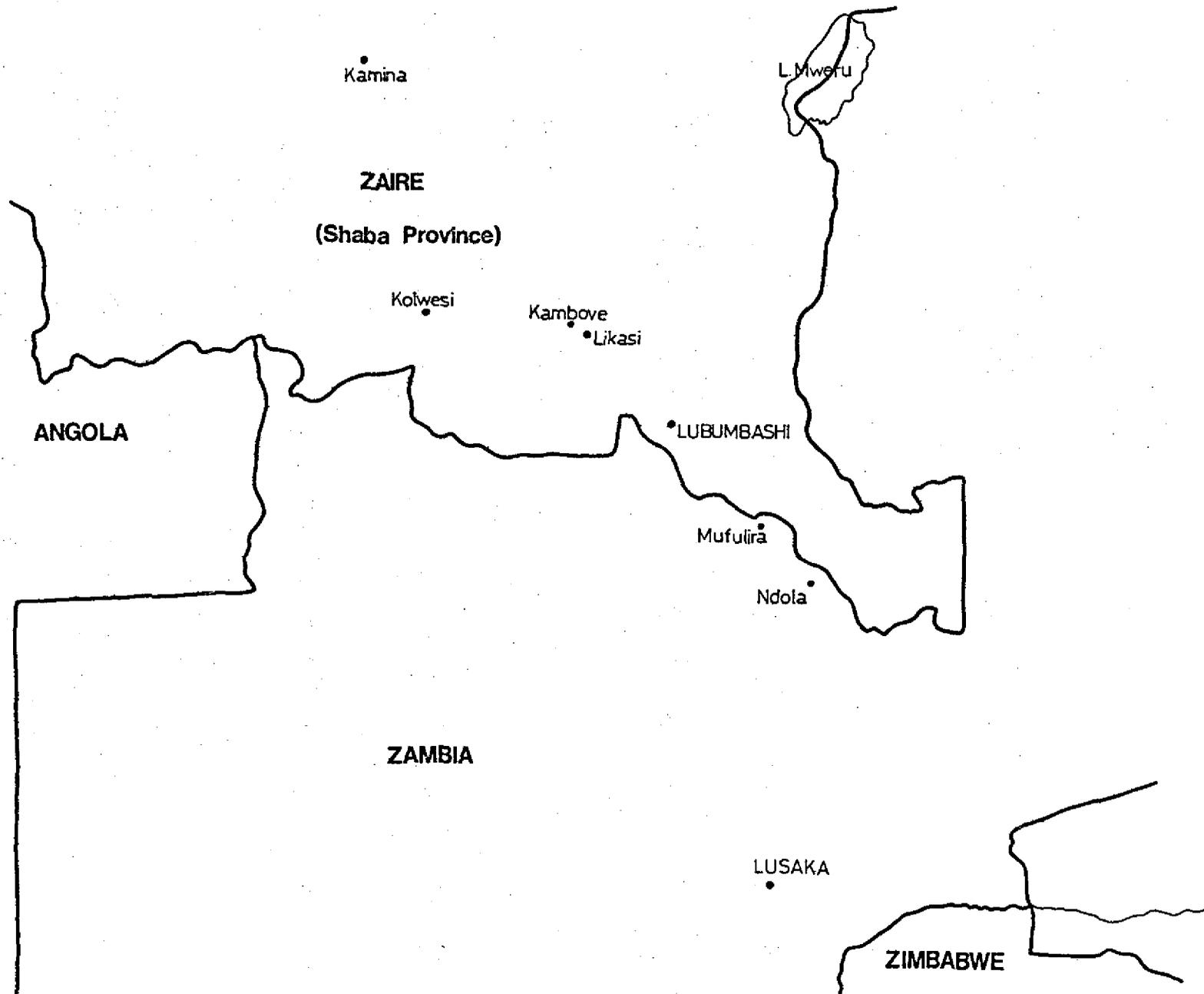
Continuing World Headache

Jonathan Kapstein

ISBN: 0-909239-73-8

The South African Institute of International Affairs
Jan Smuts House
P.O. Box 31596
BRAAMFONTEIN
2017
South Africa

October 1980



ZAIRE : CONTINUING WORLD HEADACHE

Jonathan Kapstein

Corporations can go bankrupt and disappear, individuals die and memories fade, but when countries are economically sick they do not go bankrupt. When they are politically ill, they do not disappear. They continue on, perhaps creating cycles of problems for their own populations and other countries - which brings me to Zaire, a country whose economy has already collapsed. It has collapsed back through its economic level at independence in 1960 and it is speedily headed for its 1910 level. In fact, if Zaire did everything right, if it got its economic and political house absolutely in order, it could, or might, reverse its growth rate and get back to zero growth rate in two to four years.

That raises the question - why are we concerned with an economic and political disaster case like Zaire? The answer is because it is one of the important disaster cases in world affairs: Zaire is bounded by nine other shaky African countries. It produces half the world's cobalt; five million more carats of diamonds a year than South Africa and South West Africa combined; and it has vast untapped oil resources in the Congo basin. But over and above this, it has five billion dollars of foreign debt, of which well over a billion dollars is in arrears. And finally, Zaire is the test case which will show whether the less developed countries of the world - the L D Cs - staggering under development loans made in the late sixties and early seventies, can be persuaded to meet strict fiscal controls. If Zaire cannot meet these strict fiscal controls, it might well trigger a major international banking crisis.

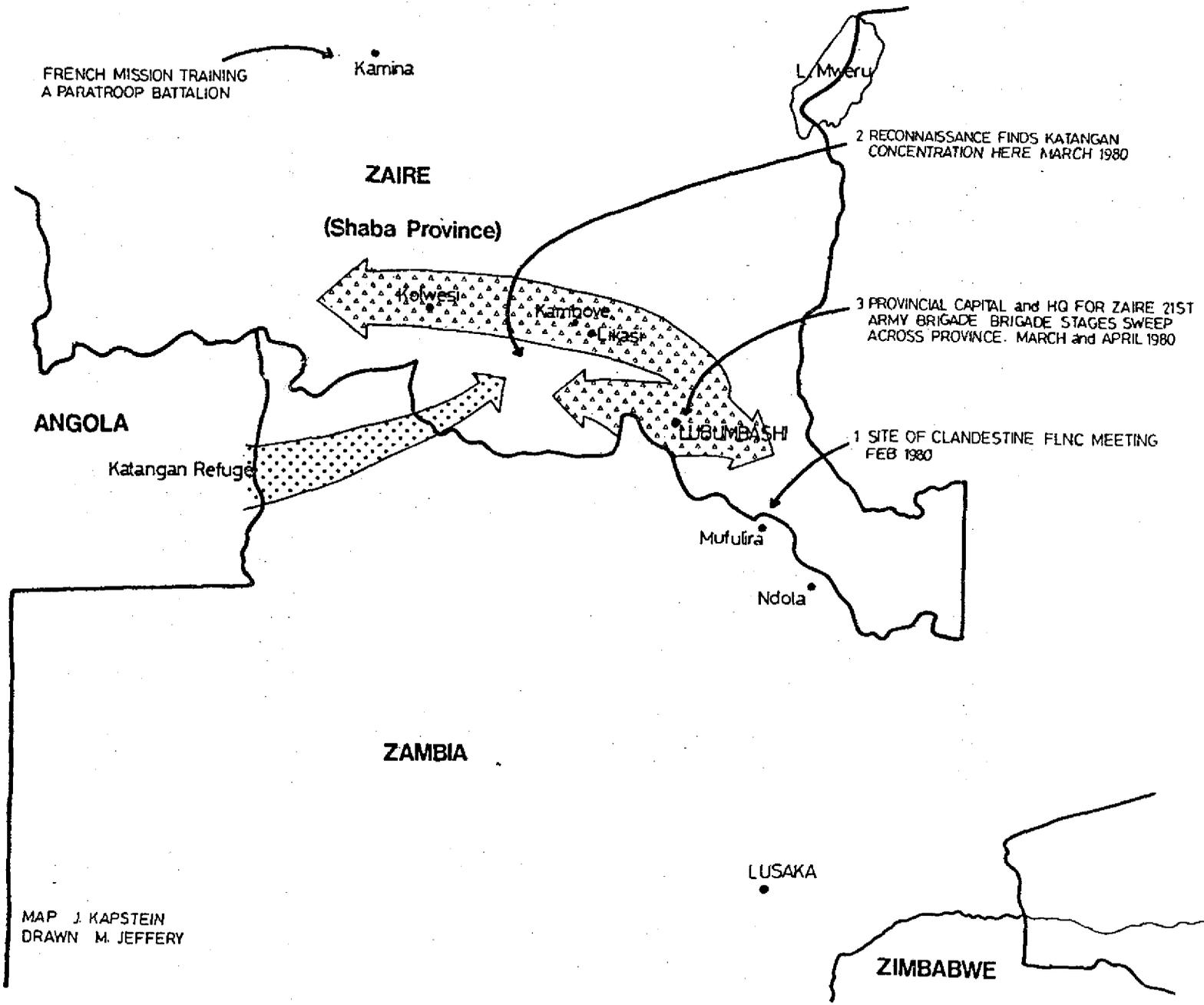
At the same time, I am sure you remember when French Foreign Legion paratroopers dropped on Kolwezi in Shaba Province two years ago. They won Shaba back from the Katangan rebels, who had erupted from their Angolan refuge for the second year in a row. It was a bloody time during which 93 Europeans were killed - (and I use European not in its South African sense of whites; but in the literal sense of Europeans living in Zaire) - and 1 000 African miners. The rebellion was called Shaba II following Shaba I the year before when the Katangan rebels occupied Kolwezi for 80 days before they were chased out. In fact, although the 1978 action was called Shaba II, it was really Shaba IV or V, Going back, there was the Katangan separatist movement right after independence in the sixties; followed by various mercenary wars; and the Simba rebellion and then finally, the two Shabas. This year there were rumours of an

impending Shaba III and expatriates who had come back to work the mines were ready to flee at a moments notice.

In anticipation of yet another rebellion, my magazine sent me to Zaire. I was in Zimbabwe at the time for the elections, and I took the opportunity to drive to Zaire. The northern borders of Rhodesia which have been closed since 1973 were opened at Christmas 1979 and the southern borders into South Africa had not yet been tightened up. In an ordinary four-door sedan, I headed out on what eventually turned out to be a 5 000 mile round trip overland into the Congo basin. I went from Johannesburg through Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Zaire to Kolwezi and back. I would have gone further than Kolwezi but the road ended at that point and the terrain was not negotiable by anything except a four-wheel drive truck equipped with a winch, and even then only in the dry season. I did go on to Kinshasa and travelled elsewhere in the country but I had to go by air and not by private car.

In Lusaka, a Zambian mining executive warned me; "Do not drive in to Zaire. If you have to, don't drive alone, and don't at any cost drive at night". With one thing and another, circumstances forced me to violate all three of his precepts and he was absolutely right. I was looted twice by Zaire Security Police at roadblocks, drunken soldiers demanded gifts at military checkpoints, and customs officials solicited bribes.

It turned out that rumours about a Shaba III - rumours that had reached intelligence and diplomatic circles in Washington, Paris, Brussels, and London - had a certain factual basis. The information I picked up then was still considered secret. The intelligence reports, started to flow following a clandestine meeting in late February in Mufulira, northern Zambia, that brought together leaders of Katangan rebel groups under the umbrella of the Congolese National Liberation Front (FLNC). The meeting took place without the knowledge or consent of the Zambian Government, because on 22 October, 1979, Zaire, Zambia and Angola concluded a pact in which all three agreed to deny shelter to guerrilla bases operating against one another in their own country. This pact was signed at Ndola and it paid off immediately. Zaire stopped fomenting discontent and aiding Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in Angola, and also sent Holden Roberto - another rival guerrilla leader - off to Europe. Angola for its part threw out an exiled Zaire leader, Nathaniel Mbumba, who went to Brussels.



FRENCH MISSION TRAINING
A PARATROOP BATTALION

Kamina

L. Mweru

2 RECONNAISSANCE FINDS KATANGAN
CONCENTRATION HERE MARCH 1980

ZAIRE

(Shaba Province)

Helwesi

Kambove

Likasi

3 PROVINCIAL CAPITAL and HQ FOR ZAIRE 21ST
ARMY BRIGADE BRIGADE STAGES SWEEP
ACROSS PROVINCE. MARCH and APRIL 1980

ANGOLA

LUSUMBASHI

1 SITE OF CLANDESTINE FLNC MEETING
FEB 1980

Katangan Refuge

Mufulira

Ndola

ZAMBIA

LUSAKA

ZIMBABWE

MAP J. KAPSTEIN
DRAWN M. JEFFERY

The Congolese National Liberation Front conferees planned an attack, seemingly a desperation attack, on the Lufira bridge between Lubumbashi and Likasi. If successful it would have cut contact between the regional headquarters of the national mining company and one of the key mining areas. That would have thrown everyone into a panic, and sent both the Europeans and the Zairean army heading for the hills. About a month later, in March, aerial reconnaissance photos turned up a concentration of rebels in this area south of Kambove, heading towards Likasi. Theoretically the photographs were taken by the Zaire Air Force, but it is doubtful whether they had the capabilities. The Zaire Air Force has thirteen Mirage jets of which only five are flyable. On the other hand, the area is full of Western intelligence agencies and diplomats. The American Consulate in Lubumbashi, for example, has eleven persons. I presume therefore that it was one of the Western intelligence agencies that turned up this possible concentration of rebels.

In response, the Zaire 21st Army Brigade began three weeks of very aggressive patrolling in the region; they increased their roadblocks and tightened up local security. This was a very different Zaire army unit compared to those troops who had fled two years earlier. Since then Belgian military advisers had taken over the training, and more importantly the supplying, of Zaire forces in the region. For the first time ever these soldiers were being fed and paid regularly, which is a very important component of military discipline. They have responded very well to training, are now schooled in company tactics, and they know what they are doing. Somehow - and one has to give them full credit - the Belgians are doing this with only twelve combat advisers in a total 100-man military mission for the 3 200 troops. The actual sweep in the region went on for three weeks in March and April. Soldiers arrested everybody out of the ordinary. Several of those arrested died in prison, or at the hands of the soldiers before they got to prison. Some elements in the brigade reverted to type and went out looting and thieving. There also was a lot of extortion. The fact remains - these things aside - that they did a thorough military job. There were no actual shoot-outs; there were no real confrontations with the Katangans who withdrew in the face of the brigade sweep. There may have been no substantive threat to begin with, despite the fact that an able guerrilla leader named Colonel Mufu, the leader of the Katangan forces two years ago, was reported to be in the region.

Although there was no real threat this time, the Katangans had existed as a force previously when the Cubans put them up to staging Shaba I and II, with Angolan support. The rebels' stated goal was the overthrow of President Joseph Sese Seko Mobutu, but the real intention was to carve off this rich copper-cobalt zone of Zaire. There is no indication at this time, however, that the Cubans in Angola are helping the Katangans. At present the Katangans no longer exist as a credible threat. They are reduced to starvation levels, their uniforms are in tatters, and they have no weapons or money. But I must add that with uniforms and money they would exist as a threat ready to erupt from their sanctuary in eastern Angola beyond the reach of any Angolan Government administration. This is one of the imponderables of the region. Nevertheless one need not worry about the Katangans for the moment for three reasons. Firstly, the Zaire army now is in much better shape. Secondly, the political situation among the three countries - Zambia, Zaire, and Angola, is much improved. The third reason is what I take to be a categorical security guarantee from the French. The French are training a paratrooper battalion at Kamina and more importantly, they have held paratroop exercises with the Zairois. In manoeuvres in late 1979 the French demonstrated that they could have Legionnaire paratroopers from their base in Libreville, Gabon, over Shaba Province in two hours - a very impressive display of power.

All in all therefore, there is no credible external threat to Shaba at the moment.

The Zaire army brigade in the region is carefully recruited from other provinces, but not Shaba and the two Kasai provinces, whose loyalty is regarded as dubious. The commander of the brigade is from Mobutu's home province of Equator, and the Regional Commissioner in Shaba is from Kinshasa. But there are two soft spots in the improved security situation. If some country with money decided to support the rebels, they would be back in business tomorrow. The second interesting soft spot is the possibility of sabotage. In 20 years of fighting in this region there has never been any sabotage. I take that to be a clear indication that the mines are the real prize for the rebels. It would be very easy to stop production at these mines with a couple of well placed bombs, but even in Shaba II, two years ago when roughly eleven hundred people were killed, the mines were left absolutely alone. I think it is easier for the rebels to create chaos in the region by shooting up a store, a village or a family, but

the possibility of sabotage is always there and demands close attention.

It might be of interest to describe briefly what Shaba looks like today. No petrol has been sold in the region since 1974. The only vehicles that move belong to the army, the mining companies, the consular officials and individuals wealthy enough to pay about R5,00 a litre. I stocked my own car with jerry cans in order to get around, but eventually I had barely enough to return to Zambia. Lubumbashi is a city of about half a million people, made strangely interesting by the lack of petrol. Rush hour is the patter of feet, and local transport is in the backs of cut-off pick-up trucks - what you call bakkies here - that are pushed or pulled by hand. Food, like petrol is also scarce because only one per cent of Zaire's arable land is cultivated. Elephant grass is nibbling at the margins of the roads, although the roads are in better shape than one would have expected because of the lack of traffic. Kolwezi's centre, where all the fighting took place, looks like something out of a science fiction movie or a Mexican village at siesta time - there is life somewhere, but it is just not visible. When I went sight-seeing downtown, I found out that it is certainly empty, still shot-up, still littered with broken glass, and there are still burned-out, bullet-pierced automobiles on the sidewalks. The only sign of life was a hand-pencilled poster announcing that the rather decrepit movie house would be open Friday night to show 'Montana' - an eminently forgettable Errol Flynn Western made in 1950.

This was one of the places where I was stopped by a security roadblock. The police were dressed in civilian clothes, they had opaque sunglasses, they all leaned from the weight of heavy hand-guns. My camera and radio were hidden in the spare tyre well, but they took whatever else was available - gifts, gadgets, jackknife, a cooler, aspirin and other items. A Zambian friend summed this all up by saying, "They took traders beads". What didn't just disappear, was demanded. Alone and in the middle of nowhere I was agreeable to these demands. But the confrontation reflected the lack of national cohesion, the lack of government control, and the lack of central direction.

Some of the macro-economic examples of this general collapse in Zaire includes the Maluku Steel Mill. This was completed in the early seventies but it has never operated at more than 10 per cent of its capacity. The last full year of production was in 1978 when it operated at under 4 per cent of capacity. Further, the country's oil refinery is wrong for the type of crude that Zaire produces so Zaire imports petroleum products where it should be self-reliant.

Corruption has become a major component of business in Zaire. For example although legal diamond production this year will be around 10 million carats, an additional five million carats of diamonds will be illegally smuggled out through the Congo Basin either east to Bujumbura in Burundi or west to Brazzaville in the Congo Republic. Bujumbura by the way is a rather interesting smuggling entrepôt. It gets Zaire's diamonds; it gets Uganda's quality coffee; and it ships them all to Europe. Brazzaville in the former French Congo will have diamond exports worth three hundred million dollars this year on no diamond production of its own. Cobalt also is an interesting case study in corruption. The metal, so important for high technology alloy applications, is valued at \$25 a pound. Exports of R600 million are shipped via air cargo annually. But these shipments came to a halt in March and April, when the head of the Security Police - Centre National de Documentation (CND) - ordered the contract with SABENA cancelled. The Belgian airline was earning 52.5 South African cents per pound to airlift 33 tons of cobalt each night, a lucrative contract that the CND and the Air Force decided they wanted for themselves. Seti Yale, head of the CND, an able but totally corrupt individual, ordered the contract shifted to ZICAS, a cargo airline secretly owned by himself and several cronies. Unhappily for Zaire, ZICAS has no aircraft and exists only on paper. It contracted the flights to independent haulers, who made only one flight and stopped for lack of payment. Eventually the ZICAS grab fell apart from internal confusion. Regular carriers now lift the cobalt again, but for two months none of the metal went to Zaire's foreign customers.

As for Mobutu himself, there is no reliable estimate for his personal wealth. One report says 25 per cent of all government funds go into a special presidential account which he dispenses at will. A great deal of it goes into his own pocket, and probably even more goes into buying loyalty among henchmen.

Meanwhile Zaire's foreign exchange earnings from copper and cobalt total more than \$1.0 billion, but last year \$135 million of that simply disappeared between the point of sale in Europe and deposits paid into the national accounts. That means 13.5 percent of this particular portion of national revenue was directly siphoned off to line pockets.

Which brings me to my next major theme: the economy. Currently the International

Monetary Fund and the World Bank are mounting a major squeeze in Zaire, with the intention of getting the indebted, fiscally inept country somehow straightened out and somehow on the road to recovery. The initiation of the idea was followed immediately by a secret meeting of credit organisations in Paris on 29 and 30 April this year in a coordinated attempt to organise Zaire's staggering public and private debt.

The 25 million Zairois have seen a 22 percent decline in their gross national product since 1975. Agricultural output of key commodities, palm oil and cotton, have fallen 60 to 70 per cent in a decade; real purchasing power has fallen 40 per cent; inflation was - pick your own figure - 70 per cent, 100 per cent, 110 per cent last year, according to various estimates. In places like Lubumbashi inflation is escalating at double that figure.

The International Monetary Fund package is the usual line up of drastic overhauls of public spending: cuts in Ministry salaries; tight control of money supply; devaluations; proper collection of increased taxes; and foreign technical teams overseeing government spending. These iron methods have been successful in Chile, and the IMF is trying to get Turkey to agree to a similar package.

A stated aim is to get inflation down to 50 per cent, an unstated aim is to cut the aura of corruption, but my own belief is that neither goal is likely to be achieved at all this year.

In mitigation, one must point out that it is not all Zaire's fault. Ten years ago international lending organisations were pressing all kinds of expensive loan packages on the less developed countries, and many trace Zaire's downturn to the ambitious \$400 million Inga-Shaba power project started in the early seventies. The Inga-Shaba project to build a power line right across Zaire is now \$200 million over cost and five years behind schedule. The project was to have used current foreign exchange earnings to finance the prospect of increased future foreign exchange earnings. The monkey-wrench in all this was the oil price hikes in the early seventies which simply threw world economics totally out of gear. Over-extended, under-financed countries have had their problems ever since. Even the United States has been trying to get its economic house in order since then. Another external blow to Zaire has been the transport problem resulting mostly from the neighbouring wars in the region. Formerly all of Shaba's mineral wealth went via the Benguela railroad in a straight line

to Lobito which took about two weeks and was a reasonably economic means of getting the copper and cobalt out.

The Benguela RR has closed, as is generally known, and despite optimistic announcements it is unlikely to open at all this year. An occasional train does get through, but not often. Zaire's route into Zambia encountered Zambian rail congestion. Attempts to get out by way of the Tazara railroad ran into the constipation at the port of Dar-es-Salaam. The route to the Mozambican port of Beira via Zimbabwe will re-open one of these days, but then again not this year. So all of Zaire's copper travels south, down to the port of East London. The run takes six weeks; and it costs perhaps a third of copper revenue. Imports come the same way, or via the national port of Matadi, situated at the mouth of the Zaire River. The "Voie Nationale" between Matadi and Shaba Province is a mixture of road, river, barge, and rail on which transit time takes about six weeks, Pilferage is anywhere from 30 per cent to 50 per cent on that route.

Gecamines, the national mining company upon which the country depends for half its foreign exchange earnings, has been hit not only by these transport problems and the wars, but also by the world collapse in copper prices which occurred in the early seventies. About one billion dollars of earnings in 1974 dropped to half that in 1975. The Benguela closure and the fall in copper prices combined to create a terrible crunch for Zaire. In constant dollar terms, I would think that Gecamines and Zaire would need to double their present revenue, which reached the 1975 level only last year, just to stay abreast of their planning. The target is to get a \$450 million rehabilitation plan back on track even if it means mining by hand, and to some extent the Zairois in Shaba Province are doing just that. In Kapushi, which is a curious mixture of Belgian culture set in an African mining town, mine production was supposed to be four hundred and fifteen thousand tons of ore in the first quarter of 1980. It was only four hundred thousand tons but it would have been three hundred and eighty five thousand tons if those working it had not been resourceful enough to rescue and rehabilitate obsolete equipment and put the extra effort into doing the best job they could.

Key problems date back to 1974, the real economic day of reckoning with the closing of railroads, the fall in copper prices, and the takeover of foreign enterprise by Zaire, effectively killing off any economic efficiency left in the economy. By 1975 Zaire owed one billion dollars in foreign debt. The country had become a net importer of food, and the final blows came with Shaba

I and II in 1977 and 1978, respectively.

Some knowledge of the background of economic rescue attempts might make the foreground clearer. Immediately after Shaba II there were secret military and political discussions in Paris among the major Western powers. These discussions basically addressed themselves to the question of what to do. The participating countries told Zaire that any additional assistance depended on the acceptance of an economic stabilisation plan including foreign auditors at the Ministry of Finance, the Customs Department, and the Central Bank. Zaire reluctantly agreed several days later at a meeting in Brussels, now called Brussels I.

Fourteen months later at Brussels II, the same convenors assembled and decided that the technical assistance plan was not enough. The country needed an entire IMF stabilisation plan. That started a protracted series of drawn-out negotiations which wound up at the end of January 1979, resulting in a contract to be signed in March.

In what was to become a recurring pattern, Zaire violated the IMF pact one week before it took effect - among other things with a 30 per cent pay rise for all government employees. To Zaire's surprise the IMF thereupon refused to sign the agreement and refused to hand over a monetary stabilization loan. Part of that agreement was a hundred million dollars foreign reserves loan. The amount was really too small to help, but it was to be a symbolic demonstration that Zaire had found fiscal stability again. Obviously the fact that it was held up showed that Zaire found nothing of the kind. The whole IMF package was painfully renegotiated and re-signed again at the end of July 1979. Within a month Zaire again violated it and the IMF again held up releasing the next slice of the stabilization loan. Zaire, meanwhile, hired a group of three foreign banks in London, Paris and New York as its financial managers to negotiate with private creditors. This came to be known as the "Club of London". They held a crucial meeting in the second half of 1979, followed by Brussels III, which in turn was followed by another meeting in Paris. All these meetings more or less bring us up to date in 1980. In January a new IMF team came out, and Zaire finally agreed to its terms in March.

What is interesting about this is the world consensus in holding Zaire together. For one thing there is total Western solidarity. Pretoria has also been kept advised throughout, and even Russia and China are not stirring the

pot. There is some feeling that Russia's motives for cooperation are her new need as a net importer of cobalt. China is training a Zaire army unit. Speaking of East bloc views on Zaire, I came away from an informal tour d'horizon with the East German deputy ambassador to Zambia with the reading that the Soviet bloc is doing nothing more now than watching Zaire.

Linked to this is the question of national sovereignty. What would happen, for example, if Zaire leant back on its positive balance of trade and its substantial foreign exchange earnings and told the IMF to go to hell? Zaire chased off the first IMF technical director last year. If Zaire decided to tell the rest of the world to go away this time, it is likely that its international public creditors would no longer support it: the Club of London, that is its commercial credit facilities would dry up; most foreign aid would cease, and the country would drift downhill even faster. This is a price that Zaire decided it does not want to pay.

It is interesting to note that South Africa is a major contributor to Zaire's status quo. Last year South Africa's heavily subsidised exports to Zaire were worth probably R80 million, while in 1978 the figure was approximately R50 million. Generally this year South Africa's trade with Black African countries is running about 75 per cent ahead of last year's figures and I presume that trade with Zaire is proportionately up. In Lubumbashi and Kinshasa everything from machinery to white wine is South African. The national railroad received 120 used but perfectly good South African hopper cars last September at the very low and obviously subsidised price of R5 000 each. In February a Zairois railroad purchasing mission visited South Africa to buy spares. Zaire has bought four locomotives from South African railways and is thinking of buying a further six. South African charter aircraft are also involved in the hauling of Zaire's commercial air cargo. Also South Africa cooperates in Zaire corruption. Much of the illegal sales of Zaire commodities are handled outside normal commercial channels and leave the country in South African chartered aircraft. Lest you think I am saying South Africa is the only country to become embroiled in Zaire's corruption, I wish to note that American congressional researchers say the Zaire Government distributed over one million dollars in American food aid to seven close associates of Mobutu last year. Also, what extralegal shipments that did not fly out on South African chartered cargo aircraft probably flew out on American supplied C-130 cargo craft.

A fascinating economic instance - another example of corruption in Zaire's

economy - during the past year was the demonetization at Christmas. All bank notes were withdrawn from circulation over a three day period and replaced by new ones, theoretically to wipe out currency speculation. The IMF technical team at the Central Bank was not advised until the withdrawal was already in process, which either reflects on the IMF lack of ability or points to a certain amount of admirable ability in chicanery by the Zairois. The substitution was drastically mishandled. Two billion zaire were in circulation beforehand and the government managed to retrieve a quarter of it. In other words, the treasury made a 75 per cent profit by pulling out the money that was in circulation. In Shaba Province where there are three million people, the Central Bank supplied only 21 million zaires, that is seven zaires a person, which works out to R3 a head. The diamond mining centre of Mbuji-Mayi in the centre of the country received no new money at all and was reduced to barter. This demonetization also effectively wiped out all the small traders who didn't get to the banks in time. Banks are still rationing new notes to their clients. One businessman in Kinshasa told me that he was offering a certified cheque for 150 000 zaires for 100 000 zaires in cash in order to meet his payrolls. He had no takers.

The external threat is diminishing as Zaire's outside supporters among the Western nations and the East bloc effectively try to prop up the regime and work for change within that framework. But there is mounting dissent inside the country. Economic imbalances are tearing the society apart. Many people are simply fleeing the cities and going back to the bush. The only other country I can think of where cities have become depopulated in the past decade is Cambodia. One school teacher in Lubumbashi, whose salary was equivalent to R40 a month, has an electricity bill of R30 a month. The teacher said he was moving back to the countryside where he plans to find a plot of land and raise some subsistence crops. I also spent several hours in a helicopter at tree-top level between Lubumbashi, Likasi, and Kolwezi and was struck by the number of small planted plots that I saw. They all looked relatively new, and they were all far from roads or even trails. I was seeing empirical proof that matched the empty streets in the cities.

The recent student demonstrations staged with the encouragement of their teachers added to the general sense of unrest. Zaire's professionals, like my school teacher friend, who are not part of the government, complain long and bitterly about increased taxes, decreased services, corruption, the police, and the situation, but they all agree so far that there is no one at all to

replace Mobutu. He does have national credence and is, incidently, personally fearless. This was demonstrated during Shaba II, when he visited Shaba province and tried to rally terrified troops by himself. His theme is that without him there would be chaos. He constantly reminds the Zairois that before he came to power the country was rent with warfare. He is in fact a unifying force.

There are ominous recent signs however that unrest is rising. Lawlessness is on the upsurge again in Shaba, with both Zaire soldiers and tattered remnants of the Katangan gendarmerie turning to banditry. Similar anarchy now prevails in Kivu, a rich farming area hurt by the collapse of the transportation net over the past 20 years. Kivu lies against the Ugandan border, and administration there also is complicated by armed and uncontrollable soldiers from Idi Amin's army who crossed the border when Amin was ousted. Exiled leaders in Brussels are now busy trying to form an anti-Mobutu umbrella to coordinate the FLNC tactics with the tiny Parti Revolutionnaire du Peuple (PRP) of Laurent Kabila in Eastern Zaire and with the even more ephemeral Movement for Union and Reconciliation.

Mobutu, meanwhile, has been engaging in interesting political exercises. He recently shuffled his administration to give the appearance of eliminating some of the visibly corrupt individuals from the Government. Several opponents were released from jail or allowed to return from exile to join the revamped administration. Moreover, with the external opposition in disarray and no meaningful internal opposition he is firmly in charge. There is no way of telling, of course, when a shot could ring out of the dark and bring him down but for the moment Mobutu is secure. The West has decided to live with the reality of Mobutu and the importance of Zaire in Africa. Whether this is a matter of buying time before chaos, or whether it is a viable programme under which Zaire can recover, remains to be seen. Certainly the economic constraints that the outside world has imposed on Zaire are unprecedented. Although it looks as though there is little chance of any economic recovery in the foreseeable future, a consoling thought is that even though things will not get any better, at least world powers are making an effort to see that they do not become much worse.