CHAPTER VII

FALLOUTS OF THE FRENCH INTERVENTION

- AN OVERVIEW

REACTIONS TO THE FRENCH ACTION
IN ZAIRE

REACTIONS WITHIN FRANCE

REACTIONS OUTSIDE FRANCE

IMPACT ON THE FRENCH INTERESTS

IMPACT ON THE WESTERN INTERESTS
In this Chapter, firstly, a scrutiny of the reactions and responses within and without France to the French action in Shaba would be made; secondly, an analysis of the repercussions of the French action in Zaire on the French interests themselves would be undertaken; and thirdly, an attempt would be made to dwell upon the impact of the French action on the whole of the EEC interests.

1. **Reactions to the French action in Zaire**

a. **Reactions within France**

Within France the Zairian "pacification" operations caused strong resentment which was already latent there due to French interventions in Chad and Western Sahara.[1] Many Frenchmen felt that such French adventurism could lead to compromise France's reputation and diplomatic clout in the Third World subjecting France to unnecessary hazards. [2] Initially, there was criticism challenging the very legality of the operation. The 1974 Franco-Zairian cooperation agreement had not been yet ratified, and under such a situation, constitutionally speaking, only the National Assembly had the authority and competence to approve armed intervention.[3]

The deputy of the Parti Socialiste, M. Dominique Taddei asserted: "In our knowledge no accord of technical and military cooperation binds us to this country[Zaire], the accord of cooperation signed in 1974 having been not ratified. This

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2. Ibid;
3. Ibid;
intervention, even if it has taken place in view of protecting the French nationals, is thus comparable to act of war that, only, the Parliament can authorize in virtue of the Article 35 of the Constitution. Moreover, the government has not considered useful to make a declaration before the Assembly, even to inform it. We cannot accept this misappreciation of the rights of the Parliament and this violation of the Constitution."[4]

President Giscard tried to justify his action by remarking that it "was necessary to carry out the operation as quickly and as quietly as possible."[5] The French defence minister, Yvon Bourges, told the National Assembly: "The government is quite willing to answer to the question which has been posed to it, because in this affair, there is nothing to hide from the national representation. Everyone knows what situation has been recently created in Kolwezi. Everyone knows also what menaces hang over a certain number of our compatriots and other inhabitants of this region, notably the Europeans. It is in response to the demand of the government, legal, of Zaire that our government, with the anxiety to preserve, in particular, the life of our compatriots, has decided to take the necessary measures to guarantee their security. The only arrangement, intended to assure the security of our citizens, has been the despatch of an appropriate military unit. I am quite certain that the national representation will understand that, under the present circumstances, it is not necessary, not even wise, to give more details."[6]

5. Ibid;
6. Ibid;
But this plea could not convince the opposition. The Socialist Party leader, Francois Mitterrand retorted while addressing the National Assembly that "it's absolutely impossible to have this kind of operation going on without the Assembly knowing about it."[7] He further stated citing an agency report about the despatch of one thousand French soldiers for Zaire that "they are going there, I imagine, to assure the security of our compatriots, but perhaps, also, to attain other objectives that we do not know....It had been normal that the government, before deciding an operation, lay it before the National Assembly. I demand thus from the minister present on the treasury bench to assure us that the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, or instead, the minister of the cooperation will consider his duty to inform the National Assembly without delay."[8] He asked searching questions in the special foreign affairs debate on 8-9 June 1978. He vehemently pointed to the fundamental implications of the French involvement in Zaire. He queried:"Who was France supposed to be fighting against? Was it merely propping up discredited regimes? Or was it fighting against its allies, Libya and Algeria? Or was the enemy international communism."[9] He felt that it was difficult to discern the Soviet Union's collusion in any of the three conflicts, rather the Soviet Union had assumed surprisingly reconciliatory posture in both Chad and the Western Sahara, carefully shunning taking sides."Perhaps the government was using the occasion to reintegrate into NATO."[10]

9. Hollick, n.l.
10. Ibid;
The criticism did not remain confined to the legal aspect of the action. Subsequently, it extended to the wider political ramifications of the intervention. Several eminent French intellectuals condemned the French action in Zaire in the strongest words:

"We accuse the French government of sending to Zaire its parachutists to sustain the colonial interests there, and to interfere in the internal affairs of the country by offering, under humanitarian pretext, a decisive prop to the corrupt and unpopular dictatorship of General Mobutu... The intervention of these last days marks an aggravation of the French politics, a return to the colonialism, to the old politics of gunboats.... We accuse the French government to have played cynically with the life of the Europeans. It has deliberately placed them in a dangerous situation by participating since several months in the internal repression of Zaire by staffing the Zairian Armed Forces and by serving the specialised anti-guerrilla materials. It has aggravated this situation by launching a military operation and the example of Stanleyville in 1964 had shown that it could not contribute to an efficacious rescue, but had made the Europeans run the risks accruing from it. From the debut of these events, the FLNC had proposed an evacuation of Kolwezi by the Europeans under the aegis of the Red Cross. Preferring a French armed intervention under the reckless conditions to the organization of an international humanitarian action, the French government carries a heavy responsibility for the massacres in which Europeans had been the victims. Its attitude confirms the confession of the spokesman of the Presidency: the objective of this colonial raid was not at first to permit the evacuation of the Europeans, but to restore the tottering power of Mobutu at any cost...."[11]

The Gaullists and the Socialists, goaded by different motivations, apprehended that the President's actions would upset "the delicate balance of France's independent policy, alienating the Soviet Union by needlessly propping up discredited regimes whose weaknesses owed nothing to Soviet subversion, while at the same time, polarizing African opinion and alienating Algeria and Libya, which had the key to successful resolution of the conflicts in Chad and the Western Sahara."[12]

The Gaullists who had drafted and proposed their own version of Euro-African development pact in the name of an independent Europe, hesitated initially to denounce the President's moves, because they were extremely popular, and de Gaulle himself might have initiated them. But their hesitation was ephemeral and "all the old suspicions of the President soon surfaced: he was suspected of betraying national independence, of using the episode to mask a surreptitious return to the NATO fold; there was an unmistakable 'Atlantic odour' to his policy."[13] Some Socialists also visualized that France was being sucked into the whirlpool of "an 'alliance atlantique africaine' in the name of anti-communism, reminiscent of the disasters of the Fourth Republic."[14]

The Communists simply reckoned it as a manifestation of a new French imperialism subserving the multi-national capitalism. One left-wing writer compared France to a watch-dog "in the service of a new Germano-American Holy Capitalist alliance."[15] "Behind much of the Socialist and Gaullist criticism lay the ghost of Vietnam, of France's own colonial disasters in Indo-China and North Africa."[16] The questions that haunted them were: "Was France about to be sucked into a bottomless pit by the quarrels of others? Was Giscard d'Estaing a latter-day Napoleon, heading for an African Sedan that might eventually destroy the Republic?"[17]

14. Ibid;
15. Ibid;
16. Ibid;
17. Ibid;
It was widely believed by Giscard's detractors that the French policy "was hasty and ambiguous, full of diplomatic and military risks and smacking of improvisation and inadequate preparations."[18] Julian Crandall Hollick tries to communicate the apprehension of many moderate pro-EEC French leaders about the actual capability of France to take up such risky assignments in Africa when he writes: "France's equivocal involvement in Africa poses another more fundamental question. How much can France hope to achieve as a would-be world power, acting on its own, without the full support of the European allies."[19]

But the criticism and condemnation could not disconcert President Giscard. Jean Francois Poncet, then Giscard's chief of staff and later the French foreign minister, said, refuting all charges against Giscard, that: "It is absurd to talk of Giscard d'Estaing as a colonialist. I have known his thinking of Africa for years, and no thought could be further from his mind. Let's simply say that he has an intuitive sense for Africa. He is the complete twentieth century man, who wants to use European wealth to help Africa into the twentieth century. He regards Africa as an extension of Europe, wants to help African leaders who have the same conception. Our critics ... have stereotyped reactions. But we find people rallying to our way of thinking today. Americans had their Vietnam reflex, but now we hope that is over. We think Americans today are taking more seriously the danger of foreign intervention in Africa. The American analysis is now more

19. Ibid;
similar to ours."[20]

Further, Mr. Oliver Stirn, the then second-ranking official in the French Foreign Ministry, who attended the meeting of French ambassadors to African countries in July 1978, reported that the ambassadors "are all being told the same thing by the Africans: that after Kolwezi and the African security force, there is hope again. All their governments had been slowly giving in to the Marxists because they had nothing to lose by doing so. Now there is an alternative."[21]

b. Reactions outside France

The French intervention in Zaire could not win the full-throated support of the Western powers. They even shunned to evince an interest for the Giscardian notion of a solidarity pact with Africa. Even prior to the intervention, Denmark, the acting President of the European Council, had publicly decried the French actions in Chad and had demanded for the withdrawal of the French troops.[22]

Belgium and France, though co-partners in the Zairian expedition, continued to be locked up in mutual recriminations: the Belgians accusing the French of trying to exploit the crises to supersede them politically and economically, and the French alleging that the Belgians might have in fact induced the invasion of Shaba either to topple President Mobutu or else finally to concretize the secession of Katanga.[23]

21. Ibid;
22. Hollick, n.1; p.78
23. Ibid;
The Belgians did not "think that the French, to their credit have ever tried to conceal that their interest in Africa is purely economic."[24] When the French reached Kolwezi first and seemed to be determined not just to evacuate the Europeans but to hold the area until legal authority was restored, the Belgians were annoyed as they felt a special responsibility towards their former colony, and could not reconcile with the idea of the French intrusion in their preserves. The Belgian Prime Minister, Mr. Tindemans did not conceal his annoyance. He complained that he had not been given adequate notice of the paratroop drop. "I was informed, but my advice was not sought," he grumbled pathetically.[25]

According to the Journal de Geneve: "On the official Belgian side, they adhere to maintain the operation of Kolwezi within the strict framework of the humanitarian assistance. But they attribute to France, like that made by the Belgian Foreign Minister, M. Henri Simonet in the course of the events, a policy which goes quite beyond, and that, Belgium, short of a national consensus and the means, cannot endorse an African policy of the destabilization of the continent. On the other hand, a definitive departure of the Belgians who have been instrumental in operating the industrial lung of Zaire till now (Shaba furnishes 75% of the export resources of this country), would have ended the Belgian

presence in the former Congo and would have revived the resentment of certain more powerful Belgians against France, those who accuse it of intending to grab the economic place of Belgium in the exploitation of the considerable mineral resources of Zaire. In fact, with regard to the evacuation of the refugees, there was not, estimate the observers, and there would not have been the Franco-Belgian difference. But for the future of Zaire and for the stability of the African continent the proposals held out at Brussels indicate clearly the existence of divergences of appreciation signifying the state of nervousness in which the Belgian governmental circles had landed.’’[26]

Thus, the Belgian government was not averse to the military operation with the objective to rescue the Europeans in Kolwezi. However, it did not wish to transcend this limited objective. It was in favour of coordination with the French government. But in no case, it intended to show hurry, and preferred an operation featuring caution and hesitation to eschew the impression that the operation was meant to save Mobutu and not the Europeans in reality, and as well keep options open for negotiations with the rebels persuading them not to harm the white expatriates and mining installations. After all, Belgium had the largest investment in Kolwezi, and as well the highest number of white expatriates there. Against such backdrop, the flurry which marked

the French intervention was bound to annoy the Belgian authorities who were prone to attribute motives to the French government. The French flurry to reach Kolwezi first seems to have mooring in two assumptions: firstly, the French did not have much mining interests, and many French expatriates in Kolwezi and hence not much worry about rebels' reprisals harming them that could inhibit their intervention. Above all, such dearth of interests spurred the French to show more solidarity and goodwill for Mobutu to cajole him to let them have bigger shares in the Zairian pie, or secondly, as stated in the IIrd Chapter, the motive of the French to reach Kolwezi first was to efface the traces of their prior involvement in the conflict on behalf of the Mobutu regime.

The second assumption may not be very cogent, but the first one has certainly some substance. Even the London Sunday Times commented supporting this point: "But in any case, they (Belgians) tend to see the whole current episode as a smokescreen, behind which the French hope to win a much larger place in Zaire's political and economic affairs. They remember only two clearly the fulsome speeches made by Giscard on a state visit to Zaire, when he referred to the former Belgian colony as 'the most important Francophone country after France itself.' In the build-up of France's African presence, greater now than at any time since Algeria won its independence in the 1960s,
they detect an aggressive desire by French government and industry to muscle in on the continent's abundant and underexploited raw materials, of which Zaire is probably the greatest single treasure house."[27]

Additionally, Belgium had always been sceptical about the French motive with regard to Zaire. It did not appreciate the gesture of goodwill shown by the ex-Congo leader, Tshombe, towards France by joining the French dominated Organization Commune Africaine et Malagache (OCAM) in 1965, and had eventually succeeded in goading President Mobutu in 1972 to sever links with the Organization.[28] But President Giscard's visit to Kinshasa in August 1975 inaugurated a new era of Franco-Zairian relations which fetched bountiful benefits for the French industry. Such Franco-Zairian cordiality smacked of jeopardizing Belgian interests in Zaire. Belgian did not swallow up this new phenomenon with equanimity, and a subtle rivalry had begun between the two EEC partners which became conspicuous during the Shaba crises. The French journal Le Matin pinpointed it affirming: "Since several years, there is competition between Paris and Brussels. France appears today as the great unconditional friend of Zaire."[29] This competition also marred the rapports between the Belgian government and Mobutu. The latter felt ignored by the Belgian leadership. According to Le Matin : "Mobutu does not hide his rage about the attitude of Brussels towards him. 'Each time I do something, says he, I am

criticised. France does not have the same systematic attitude towards Senghor or Houphouet-Boigny."[30]

On the other hand, the French accused that "the Belgians, since (Moise) Tshombe have been trying to split Katanga(Shaba) off from the rest of the country. Save the rich part, and the devil take the rest."[31] As mentioned above, French harboured a suspicion about the possible collaboration between the rebels and Belgium to realize the goal.

Evidences have come to light which establish that the Belgian authorities were in touch with the FLNC during the Shaba crises. While carrying on the consultations with other Western powers about a rescue operation, the "Belgian government appeared to wish to act with great precaution and restrain any hasty act in regard to intervention", [32] and secretly initiated negotiations with the FLNC leaders to woo them to refrain from harming the white expatriates and mining installations. On May 16, 1978, the Belgian foreign minister, M. Simonet declared that "the worst would be an evacuation of all our citizens",[33] which indicated that the Belgian authorities had some other way out. La Libre Belgique interpreted it as the Belgian willingness to avoid military action saying: "In the foreign affairs the tone is less alarmist and it was indicated that they would hope to be able to avoid an operation of military character."[34] and this could have been prompted by some positive contact with the rebels.

33. Ibid;
34. La Libre Belgique, May 17, 1978.
However, on the same day, the Belgian foreign minister told the Parliament that: "He intended to put everything in work to negotiate in Kolwezi with the 'authorities in fact.'"[35] He further confirmed that he was in touch with "two personalities (of Kolwezi) representing the Europeans and this afternoon, the consul of Italy who assists our representative in the efforts to meet those who constitute the authorities in fact, that is to say the chiefs of those groups more or less organized."[36]

According to Afrique-Asie, Belgium held negotiations with FLNC representatives in Brussels itself. The weekly disclosed that on May 17, 1978 a meeting took place between the chief of the Cabinet of the foreign ministry, M.Caheen, and a delegation of the FLNC "accompanied by a witness, a lady who acted as intermediary between the two parties."[37] The primary purpose of the negotiations was to ensure the safety and as well the evacuation of the Belgian nationals in Kolwezi. Safe evacuation was the best option as several members of the Belgian government had begun to "take note of the fact that no solution will be viable in Zaire as long as the Front would remain armed and Mobutu remained in power."[38]

The FLNC was itself willing to cooperate in this regard in order to preempt a foreign intervention that could tilt the balance in favour of Mobutu. The FLNC leaders were aware of Mobutu's intention to provoke and manoeuvre killings of the whites in Kolwezi so that the Western powers could be wheedled to

35. Willame, n.32.
36. Ibid;
38. Ibid; p.32.
intervene. Mobutu had also launched a massive media campaign to trumpet the peril to which the whites were susceptible, solely to whip up fear-psychosis in West and exacerbate a Western intervention. The FLNC clearly stated: "Mobutu has based his strategy on the necessity of a foreign military intervention. His officers of propaganda, notably in Belgium, will do their best to spread false news, and alter, modify, manipulate the objective informations."[39] The FLNC representatives assured the Belgian delegates to extend all cooperation in evacuating the Belgian nationals and asserted:"We affirm that no civil foreigner or Congolese has been the object of bullying or extortions of any kind on the part of our combatants. It is contrary to our principles. We have never thought that it is with assassinations and massacres that one builds the future of a nation."[40]

Later, a FLNC representative confirmed on the Belgian television that "the Front was prepared to assure the evacuation of all the foreign nationals from Kolwezi. It had specified that the International Red Cross in Geneva had already been contacted in this regard by the Zaire Komitee of Brussels."[41] On early May 19 the FLNC had a press conference. It renewed its proposition concerning the evacuation of foreign nationals from Kolwezi with the help of the Red Cross, and even indicated the possibility of an evacuation by the rail-road that links Kolwezi to Zambia and Angola. "All the more as Luanda and Lusaka, informed by Brussels, had declared to be ready to collaborate in

40. Ibid;
41. Ibid;
the success of the project."[42]

But such evacuation was never to take place, despite all the sincerity and willingness of the Belgian government as this could clearly culminate into the underwriting of the control of rebels over Shaba by the Western powers. And when the prospect of its success seemed imminent, the French government aborted it by despatching its paratroops to Kolwezi forcing Belgium to follow the suit.

Belgium had also conceived of intervention, but only as the last resort. As soon as the FLNC rebels captured Kolwezi, the Belgian government constituted a "committee of crisis which follows the events hour by hour."[43] On May 16, the "comité de crise" had asked the Belgian Chief of Army Staff to prepare an urgent "project of operation in order to be able to eventually carry out a mission of evacuation."[44] On the same day a meeting of the delegates of US, France, UK and Belgium took place at Stuttgart to deliberate over the crisis, and it was decided to launch a rescue operation. The Belgian government agreed "to act in concertation with "[45] the Western powers.

Notwithstanding, Belgium did not wish to undertake the risks involved in such operation, and carried on secret parleys with the FLNC to explore other pacific solutions. However, J.C. Willame opines that such caution and vacillation on the part of Belgium was rather the result of the division of opinions among the members of the Belgian government who held contradictory

42. Afrique-Asie, No.166,1978; p.32.
44. Ibid;
45. Ibid;
views over the issue. It is learnt that even after the despatch of the Belgian paratroops for Kolwezi, some ministers insisted for their recall. J.C. Willame writes that a mere wish for pacific solution was not the cause of the Belgian hesitation to jump into the Shaba fray but "it is equally necessary to take into consideration the division which prevailed at the time in the heart of the government team, division which attained its point of culmination during the night of Thursday and Friday (May 18 and 19). The Netherlandphone members of the government would demand at this occasion to call back the parachutists who were on way to Kamina; others, of whom the minister of defense, would insist that the operation be pursued. Thus, the Belgian political and communal problems came to inscribe themselves intimately into the context of the ministerial debates on the conduct to be followed in Zaire."[48] The Belgian Prime Minister, M. Tindemans conceded this point in his interview to the Soir when he said that "he had been wrongly informed by his ministers. I had asked a number of ministers to furnish me the notes concerning their vision of the affairs so that I could make a synthesis. It is that certain informations had not been debated in the committee of crisis."[47]

Even Mobutu was aware of the division in the Belgian cabinet and reacted bitterly when the Belgian foreign minister declared the recapture of the Kolwezi airport by the Belgian troops dubbing it as "contempt towards the Zairian forces."[48] In a statement to the Zairian newsagency, AZAP, President Mobutu

46. Willame, n.32.
47. Le Soir, June 22, 1978.
quipped: "We never demanded the Belgians, whose mentality we know, to come to fight in Kolwezi in the place of the Zairians."[49] He, however, soon accused M. Simonet, the Belgian foreign minister "to have blocked for 24 hours, at his department of the foreign affairs, the demand of aid of Zaire rather than to pass it to the National Defence, then that the rebels maltreated the Belgian nationals in Kolwezi."[50] The Zairian leader added angrily: "Why did he waste so much time? It is for Simonet to answer this question."[51] The AZAP also carried the news that President Mobutu had ordered the Zairian diplomats, posted in Brussels to have no more contact with M. Simonet till further order, "even if it could entail the rupture of the diplomatic relations with Belgium."[52]

The Belgian hesitation in regard to the military action in Zaire is also ascribed to certain economic parameters. It is held that the Belgian interests in Zaire were far from being in harmony with one another. Some Belgian economic interests, represented by the creditors and traders, advocated unflinching support for Mobutu as his political survival was the sheet-anchor for their prosperity. While the other section represented mainly by non-creditors, having legal mining interests were antagonistic to any support for the Mobutu regime as its survival or debacle could not affect its interests much. Reflecting the above contradictions of the Belgian economic interests, a Belgian economist rightly wrote, although, in reality, dwelling upon the

50. Ibid;
51. Ibid;
52. Ibid;
prospective plan to revamp the Zairian economy in La Libre Belgique in early 1978 that "all the spheres of affairs (Belgian) were not uniformly interested in the success of a plan or recovery.... The parties immediately taking interest are evidently the grand creditors, the local industrial manufacturers, the agro-industrial societies, the sector of the construction and the foreign exporters of products manufactured for which a global revival of the economy and a substantial contribution of external resources signify better chances of return and a possibility to recover profits..... The non-creditors or those who in one way or the other have a direct and legal access to the resources of Zaire do not have an immediate interest in a global hygiene of the economy and aim at specially to seek the sectorial reorganizations. They can wait. Their vital economic interests are not in danger today. But there is the multitude of 'commercial adventurers' and investors whose interest is to maintain the existing financial disequilibriums from which they extract, by subtle combinations, exorbitant and rapid profits."[53]

The whole syndrome of the Belgian ambiguity and surreptition towards the Shaba II crisis has been graphically summed up by the French journal Marches Tropicaux of May 1978 as follows: "These events (Shaba) have opened a crisis in the relations between France and Belgium. 'France has an African policy which is not ours', declared the Belgian Foreign Affairs Minister, M. Simonet. 'France seeks to maintain the points of support on the black continent whereas Belgium seeks cooperation with a country

53. La Libre Belgique, 4-5, February 1978, cited by JC Willame.
rather than with a regime. It is not a divergence between Brussels and Paris but a difference of political vision. The quarrel is not vain', added the minister. This difference of conception could explain the dilatoriness of the Belgian military intervention. The government of Brussels would have attempted to negotiate with the invaders of Shaba the evacuation of the foreigners of Kolwezi and is said to have been on the point of reaching an accord with FLNC which would have allowed to avoid the loss of human lives among the European residents of Kolwezi. This accord would have required a ceasefire between the Zairian troops and the invaders for its implementation. This accord would have been rejected by General Mobutu because it would have implied a recognition of the FLNC by Belgium. The irritation of General Mobutu, before this that he considers as a Belgian 'treason', is such that he is said to be willing to go to the extent of a rupture of diplomatic relations with Brussels.... A section of the Belgian press, and in particular the most influential Flemish daily Standard, does not hide, in effect, that certain Belgian political and economic circles, having no more any confidence in General Mobutu would have seen without grief the downfall of his regime and the installation in Kinshasa or in Shaba of new authorities with which they could be able to maintain more confident relations."[54]

Against such backdrop, the French authorities could not do much except going on their own in Zaire to safeguard the Western nationals and interests. While the Belgian authorities were bogged down in vacillation, the French paratroops readied to

plunge into the Shaba imbroglio. On May 17 evening itself the Belgian ambassador to Zaire had remarked that: "everything is ready on the French side for an aerial rescue operation.....The Elysee expects, nevertheless, that Belgium joins the operation." [55] It is held that the Belgian indecision about the military action had whetted disclosures about the Western plan of intervention by some disgruntled Belgian officials, marring its prospects of success and efficacy by preempting the element of surprise which France primarily intended to feature its action against the rebels. The Sunday Times rather correctly pinpointed the cause of feud between France and Belgium over the military action in Shaba in these words: "The correct degree of speed, and of secrecy, is the immediate subject of the Franco-Belgian rift. Paris claims that the build-up of the Belgian rescue effort was too elaborate and ponderous. What was worse, it was being far too heavily publicised, to a point where even the rebels in distant Kolwezi could hardly be unaware of its details. And any chance of surprise, in the French view, was finally eliminated by the Belgians' insistence on going through a form of negotiation with the rebels' representatives ...... This the French regarded as 'profitless and dangerous', and effectively undermining the total news black-out ordered by Giscard as far as France's own efforts were concerned." [56]

Despite such Franco-Belgian rift, it is an axiom that both countries wanted the protection of European nationals and as well the Western interests in Shaba. But their perception of the

55. Willame, n.32.
crisis and the method to resolve it differed creating a veneer of contradictions of interests between the two powers. In actuality, both, with their contradictory approaches towards the crisis contributed quite positively to the promotion of the Western interests in Zaire. JC Willame has adroitly elucidated this fact as follows: "One can then anticipate that the second war of Shaba, far from having seriously disturbed the hegemonic interests, will furnish them the occasion and the pretext to push further the placing under tutelage of Zaire which has assiduously negotiated since last year. Certainly, the stakes are not simple in Zaire. The affair of Kolwezi has put in limelight the existence of a contradiction between the French and Belgian attitudes, contradiction sustained by the rivalry of interests in both short and medium terms. It should not, however, be exaggerated to the point of dubbing it as an antagonism between the two forces of imperialism. In fact, the division of work has perfectly worked to the profit of the whole of the Western interests in Africa: in the name of the type of interest that it has in Zaire and in the name of its capacity for rapid intervention France was the best placed to carry out an operation of police that Belgium could not lead considering the 'depth' of its implication in Zaire and its limited means."[57]

Besides, Britain had been also sceptical about the French perception of the African problems, like that of the Shaba crises. However, in a separate but obviously coordinated exercise, the British government had announced on May 19 that "three Hercules Transport aircraft, with a cargo of Land-Rovers, 57. Willame, n.32.
medical supplies and some 40 army personnel, had taken off from Brize Norton air base for Lusaka, the Zambian capital. It was announced that the British operation was 'entirely humanitarian'.[58] But on June 5, 1978 when the delegations of Belgium, France, West Germany, the UK and the US gathered at a meeting in Paris, the British delegate expressed discontent at the French behaviour in Africa and remarked that the African problems should not be always construed in terms of East-West rivalry.[59] "Neither Britain nor the United States, anxious to avoid antagonizing the 'front-line' States in a possible Rhodesian settlement, supported the President's (Giscard's) ideas for a special development fund or a permanent African peace-keeping force trained and equipped by the West. The most that France could extract from its allies was a general warning to the Soviet Union and Cuba that the West would not sit idle by in the event of further 'destabilization', and commitments by the United States to ferry the six-nation African force that was to replace the French legionnaires and by the Belgians to leave behind part of their force for a limited period."[60]

Moreover, the French adventurism in Zaire soured the Franco-Soviet relations. Though Russia had denounced the first Zairian intervention in March-April 1977, yet President Brezhnev did not postpone his visit to France in the following June.[61] But Russia reacted more bitterly when France got directly involved in Zaire in May 1978. The Russians dubbed the French and Belgian

59. Hollick, n.1; p. 78.
60. Ibid;
61. Ibid;
operations in Zaire an "overt act of aggression" which resulted into "wholesale terror against the local population."[62] They asserted that "the situation in Shaba province was reminiscent of the worst times of colonization of Africa by the Europeans," and declared that the "humanitarian pretext had proved to be nothing but a 'fig-leaf to cover up an undisguised interference into the internal affairs' of Zaire."[63]

The Soviet press blamed the Legionnaires for deliberately instigating the massacre of European civilians in order to justify their 'imperialist intervention'.[64] Tass attributed the responsibility for the bloodshed in Shaba to the Western powers and said:"Coming to the rescue of the unpopular regime (of Mobutu), the French legionnaires and the Belgian soldiers have perpetrated in Kolwezi and in other cities of Shaba a veritable massacre for ultimately casting the fault on the rebels."[65] Furthermore, the Soviets alleged that "the evacuation from Shaba of Europeans whose lives were 'allegedly' in danger, was completed, but the invasion of Zaire was continuing....the real motive for the operation was primarily to impose on the Africans NATO's policy of penetrating Zaire and plundering its wealth and natural resources."[66] The Soviet newsagency also charged that the US was directing the operation and justifying it "by spreading a myth of Soviet and Cuban involvement in the Shaba rebellion." [67] But the truth has come to light, it continued,

63. Ibid;
66. The Times, May 23.
67. Ibid;
and "now the whole world witnesses that neither Soviet nor Cuban troops but soldiers of certain Nato countries, air-lifted in American planes, are sowing death and destruction in Zaire."[68] Pravada alleged that the five-nation meeting in early June had been convened to prepare a punitive military expedition against African states which did not will to kowtow to the Western pressures and designs. Even the French President's brainchild, the African security force, earned the wrath of the Soviet press. Tass wrote that the project of African security force was "a sort of permanent institution of collective African gendarmerie, ever ready to subdue a popular insurrection in the country of such part and to come to the aid of the foreign monopolies. In other words, the Africans will do the work actually that of West Europeans and Americans in Zaire."[69] It further added :"All this policy seeks only one objective: to facilitate the application of the neo-colonial policy of the West by the African gendarmes....The fact that the African forces of security be created under the aegis of the former metropole and that the majority of its participants be tied with Paris by a system of military treaty rouses a particular disquietude."[70] The Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev accused the West of "cynical interference" in Zaire and even "trying to avert attention from the cynical character of this intervention by making it a propaganda campaign about supposed Soviet and Cuban participation in these events."[71] He warned the West to

70. Ibid;
shun "trying to mar the process of detente."[72]

However, President Giscard had his own justification and he wrote a letter to President Brezhnev arguing that detente was indivisible and should apply to Africa,[73] trying to communicate to the Russian leader that if USSR did not restrain its overwhelming ambitions in Africa, France would be unable to bridle its own adventurism as it could not remain a silent spectator when its allies were on the brink of succumbing to the whims of the forces under the intoxication of 'alien ideology.'[74]

2. Impact On The French Interests

France had been strenuously striving to get a foothold in Zaire since long. Because it was aware of the hidden Zairian mineral troves. It also knew the political-military vulnerability of the Mobutu regime which had become "simply an insecure predator upon civil society, a debt collector for external creditors"[75] , being afflicted with "shrinkage in the competency, credibility, and probity of the state."[76] In such a milieu, it was hard for the Mobutu regime "to sustain the legitimacy necessary for (even) routine functioning"[77] and the Shaba like flares-up could be combated only with foreign military assistance. And France did not wish to miss this unprecedented

73. Hollick, n.1.
75. Young & Turner, n.28; p.399.
76. Ibid;
77. Ibid;
unprecedented opportunity to realize its long-cherished desire to partake in the Zairian economic bonanza.

The editor of the Paris-based newsweekly Jeune Afrique, Siradiou Diallo made this point crystal clear when he remarked during the Shaba II: "We French are condemned to aid Zaire. Politically, strategically and economically, it is key to the whole continent." [78] France had even the wherewithals to accomplish this goal in terms of political willingness, constitutional latitude and military prowess as described in Chapter VI. Additionally, the spectre of the Soviet hand in the FLNC attack had alarmed the other Western powers, which did not want to intervene directly, but willed to encourage the French intervention. All these factors helped France to gain ascendancy in Zaire and convince President Mobutu that France could be depended upon in the moments of crises. [79] Such conviction of President was bound to open the floodgate of the Zairian economy for the French involvement.

President Giscard d'Estaing was ingenious enough to read the mood of President Mobutu. He sagaciously whetted the fears of the Zairian leader by drawing a murky portrait of the African scenario becoming replete with various spectacles of disruptions due to the Soviet infiltration. Just in the wake of the Shaba I Giscard had begun to feed Mobutu that the African development was not possible without peace on the continent, and against the backdrop of the Soviet designs, peace could obtain only if Africa could snuggle more closely to Europe, particularly through

France. Till the Shaba I nobody talked in such a way, but Mobutu's tribulations fostered this new theme of the Euro-African solidarity with all concomitant military-economic dimensions. "Till last year there prevailed the conviction that all the internal and external problems of the African states would be resolved by development, a necessary and sufficient condition for internal and external peace. But at Dakar the President of the French Republic denounced the 'rising perils in Africa', and invited his interlocutors to preserve their identity by avoiding falling in more or less direct dependence on the two superpowers and outlined: 'the search for a middle way' that he sees in the construction of the Euro-Africa. In his discourse at the opening of the fifth Franco-African conference in Paris, M. Valery G. d'Estaing took up the same theme. 'We should refuse that the politics of the blocs does not ravage Africa'... 'It is, henceforth, the peace itself should become the first condition of the progress of Africa' he declared."[80]

In addition to some other African leaders, President Mobutu was easily trapped. In fact, he could not think otherwise because of his Shaba privations. "Mobutu is entirely conscious of the national defects; all those who have recently approached him, admit it. He finished, in his turn, by drawing the lessons. repeated in the past: the two alarms of Shaba, the centrifugal temptations of the provinces; the devastating consequences of the formidable national inertia."[81] President Mobutu felt that France alone could be trusted for succour in hours of trials.

This is what President Giscard had aimed at from the very inception of his overtures to Mobutu since 1975. His intervention in Shaba was fraught with perils, but he did not flinch and helped Mobutu to the hilt to dissipate the PLNC forces. "France takes its risks, but bets reasonably on the future. Hoping yet that Zaire will succeed a day in discarding its old demons."[82]

Henceforth, Zaire was disposed to become the sanctuary for France's industrial-military products, and as well a safe supplier of strategic raw materials and other primary products for the French consumption. "France also strives to reap the 'dividends' of its military interventions and its technical assistance. It wants to be present in Shaba, send its cooperants there and invest there more. For the first time, Paris is really "at the whiskers of the Americans", to take a majority participation in the biggest copper mine of the world: Tenke Fungurume."[83]

Thus, the French action in Shaba helped deepen its involvement in the Zairian economy. Just within a year France had won a good chunk in the Zairian wealth. By late 1979 "France furnishes the crutches of cooperation not always adapted to the needs of the malady (of Zaire), but which has the merit to exist. In one year, all confounded chapters, subsidies, technical assistance, special loans - its aid has multiplied thrice. It operates especially in the mineral prospecting, the education, the telecommunications, the agricultural development, the aerial and railway infrastructures. Paris has decided to invest for a

82. D'Epenoux, n. 81.
83. Ibid;
long term: the potential of Zaire is immense. Well managed, it
could be one of the powers of the continent....But it is at first
necessary to assure the immediate: 'Last year, Kolwezi jolted the
country, said Colonel Michel Franceschi, chief of the military
mission of cooperation. But it has already fallen asleep: we are
there to keep the guard. 'No doubt, the French soldiers have
drawn the lessons of Shaba.' In June 1978, they were 70: they are
today 125 to staff and train the Zairian army....The
French...operate the aviation, the armoured vehicles, as
parachutists.'[84]

In the realm of military cooperation, France emerged as an
important supplier of military equipments, that coupled with the
French technical assistance, apparently beefed up the Zairian
army. In 1980 France supplied 68% of the total Zairian arms
importers.[85] Besides, by 1980 France had supplied 17 Mirages,
some Frelon helicopters, "la couverture electronique" for the
Zairian military bases of Kitona, Kolwezi and Kamina, and even
the equipments "in the domain of military aeronautics, there is a
total investment of more than 500 millions of French francs to
the benefit of the firms: Marcel Dassault, SNIAS, SNECMA and
Thomson-CSF."[86] Besides, "in the wake of Shaba II, a new 21st
Brigade was formed under Belgian tutelage, and was based in
Shaba. French military advisors organized the 31st Parachute
Brigade in Kinshasa. In contrast to the 21st Brigade which was
under the Zairian command, French officers were directly

85. Pascal Chaigneau : La Politique Militaire de la France en
incorporated in the command structure of the 31st. Elements of the 31st, without the French officers, performed respectably when despatched to Chad in 1981-82 as part of an OAU peacekeeping force, and again in 1983."[87]

Shaba crises did not only better the prospects for closer military interactions between France and Zaire, but rather the entire Franco-African military plexus was reinforced. From 1975 itself, the amount of French military aid to Africa, mainly Francophone, indicated a trend to enhance, but between 1977 and 1980 it somewhat doubled. Table A pinpoints this enhancement."This increase of the credits enables to accelerate the formation of the African military cadres, and subsequently to reduce the number of the French soldiers stationed in Africa, whose presence contributes to feed the discontent of the nationalist forces."[88] From 846 in 1963, the number of African military personnel undergoing training in France increased to 1661 in 1979 and 1717 in 1980, the target being to train two thousand Africans per year. It may be contended that such French policy could jeopardize France's control over the Francophone military set-up in the long run by gradually assigning more responsibility to the African soldiers who may be wheedled to change side any time. But concrete precautions have been taken to preclude such a possibility. Thomas Jalloud elucidates this point:"For all that, with the rise of the perils, the neocolonial encadrement of an African army remains the best guarantee for political stability. That is why Giscard has taken

87. Young & Crawford, n.28; p.268.
care to develop such encadrement, assured by the French military cooperants: their number passes from 915 in 1976 to 1190 in 1979, although their number was in constant diminution between 1965 and 1975. These cooperants, entrusted in the wake of independence, to prepare, in certain number of States, a gendarmerie and a strong army of several thousands of men, occupy today the posts of counsellors at all the levels of the military administration of the African countries to which they are sent... The interest, that the French imperialism represents, in both their formation and direct encadrement, lies in the control that they permit to exercise on the local armies in order to prevent them from becoming the hearths of opposition to the incumbent regimes."[89]

The French aid for the training of the African military personnel is a sort of investment for creating markets for the French weapons. These military personnel are adept in handling only French weapons. Hence, the import of the French weapons is guaranteed. The Shaba crises certainly exerted positive repercussions on the sale of French arms to the African countries. By 1980 France was supplying about 50% of the arms requirements of its erstwhile colonies, 68% of the former Belgian colonies and about 32% of the former British colonies.[90] The total value of French arms sales to Africa was to the tune of 870,000,000 French francs in 1980.[91] On the whole France furnishes 21% of Africa’s arms requirements per year. However, France has concentrated its sales in a few countries, and has

90.&91. Chaigneau, n.85; p.38.
rather gained monopoly over their arms purchases. Table B gives the list of the African countries where France nearly monopolized the arms sales in 1980.

France has also bagged contracts to build up a massive telecommunication networks in Zaire: "construction of a city of radio and ultra modern television (451 millions of French francs), installation of thirteen stations of satellite telecommunications (488 millions) and a line of 'faisceaux hertziens' between Kinshasa and Lubumbashi (42 millions), well a total of about a billion of French francs."[92] Of course, these contracts came into existence during 1975-76 but the major work was consummated with alacrity after Shaba crises only. And today "in the milieu of dense forests and of the stunted savana vegetation, in Zaire, the country situated in the heart of Africa, stretches out a chain of metallic structures, several stories high and especially unusual amidst this landscape. In a way, these towers are the lofty monuments..."[93] of France's success in gaining a foothold in the Zairian economy.

It is to be noted that the company, Thomson-CSF, which bagged the contracts, and the financial institution, B.f.c.e. which undertook to bankroll the contracts were led by the family members of President Giscard. This engendered the doubt that President Giscard strove to win over Mobutu under the persuasion of his family members who foresaw great gains if larger contracts could be managed in Zaire. The Wall Street Journal of April 23, 1981 affirmed that "the decision to dip into the gains that

93. L'Unite, No.422, May 9, 1981.
Zaire draws from the precious copper, cobalt and diamonds to finance a costly project, reflects to a great extent the predominant influence of the Giscard d'Estaing family. The eldest of the first cousins of the President, Philippe, is the president of the company which has obtained the bulk of the contracts to construct the Zairian television network, and another first cousin, Francois, is the president of the enormous French bank of foreign commerce (B.f.c.e.) which furnishes a financial participation necessary in the realization of the project."[94]

Nevertheless, it remains a mystery as to what role President Giscard actually played in facilitating the bagging of these contracts by the companies run by his cousins. But the Wall Street is prone to trace some nexus asserting: "a spokesman of the French firm has admitted that the project 'could have made part' of the accords, remaining secret, signed" by Giscard and Mobutu in 1975 and as a result "several times since this period, the French troops have intervened to protect Mobutu from the opponents of his regime."[95]

Moreover, such massive electronic media paraphernalia is quite beneficial for Mobutu, who requires to constantly beguile his people to support him and thus add legitimacy to his personal rule. "One knows the strategic importance of the media for the dictators. Zaire does not form exception to this rule, and France contributes generously to provide to the ruling class its megaphone."[96] No doubt, thousands of Zairians are caught up in the whirlpool of famine every year, and most of the villages

94. L'Unite, n.93.
96. L'Unite, n.93.
in the country have no acquaintance with electricity. But in December 1980 Zaire could boast of being "one of the first countries of the world to dispose its own networks of telecommunications."[97] The completion of the project was a grand success for the French industry. It lay the foundation for massive future industrial supply for the maintenance of the project in the form of spares and technical experts which are quite lucrative. J.C. Willame refers to this point: "Let us point out that the principal executor of these sophisticated schemes, Thomson-CSF, has exported extremely complex equipments for which no contract for maintenance or management is in general anticipated, and even if it is there, it is at an exorbitant cost."[98]

In the domain of investment the French participation remained modest in Zaire. The French interests in Zaire continued to essentially concentrate in the following societies: "Peugeot and Renault, whose capital in the Zairian subsidiaries is integrally French, Society of the breweries of Kinshasa (capital entirely French), Zairian Manufacture of the match-boxes (Mazal) (where the French interests represent 44% of the capital and area associated with the Belgian capitals of even greater order), Utexco (French capital 30%), Society textile of Kisangani (Sotexki) (French capital 15%)."[99]

Whatever has been the French investment in Zaire, it has been more or less in the form of transfer of technological equipments which have been conveniently converted into shares, as

97. L'Unite, n.93.
98. Tricontinental, p.224.
the Zairian companies could not pay the price of the equipments required for their operation. This clearly indicates that such investments do not aim at promoting industrialization in Zaire, but are imbued with economic and political objectives for the benefit of the French economy and the Mobutu regime. J.C. Willame categorically notes: "With the sale of these equipments which do not depend on any whatsoever commission of investments but directly on the Presidency of the Republic, they take place without difficulty in the context of the 'technologicl safari' undertaken by the great industrial powers of Zaire. The majority of equipments delivered by France to Zaire has in effect no direct relation with the industrialization of the country; their nature is especially political, in the context where they contribute in the reinforcement of the clique in power."[100]

France has also made much headway in grabbing several exploring and prospecting operations in Zaire. Although the French organization, BRGM (le Bureau de recherches geologique et minieres), had begun its activities in Zaire in early 70s, but the Shaba crises rendered a stimulating fillip to it. Today "in Zaire the BRGM has succeeded to monopolize the domain of the mineral cartography and has substituted the role played by the former Union miniers du Haut-Katanga, the society depending on the Belgian financial holding, Society generale du Belgique. Following the retreat of the American multinational Amoco Minerals, the BRGM has become the principal stockholder of the multinational consortium SMTF, which has appropriated one of the

richest mines of copper in the world."[101] Besides, France has successfully conserved its interests in Shaba "via the BRGM, the Cogema, an important capacity of investment in the mineral sector (tin, maganese, nickel, cobalt and copper). It is largely the anxiety to protect this capacity which was at the origin of the French intervention in Kolwezi in 1977 and 1978 as well as the permanence of its military preserve in Zaire."[102]

The Shaba crises also whetted the French ambition to install nuclear missiles on the African continent. For this purpose Zaire could be the most suitable place in view of its strategic location in Africa. Already, a private German company, OTRAG, had been busy in setting up a rocket launching test base in Zaire. And it had been revealed that "the base of the missile testing in Zaire, installed by a West German society (OTRAG) 'tied to the government', would have been the result of a 'cooperation treaty between France and Federal Germany,....destined in the long term to control the sea routes of petrol-supply around the Cape of Good Hope."[103] Such disclosures incited resentment in Europe because the OTRAG venture was construed as a device to abort the restrictions imposed upon Germany not to possess atomic weapons. It is held that Chancellor Helmut Schmidt personally counselled President Giscard to let France itself take up the venture in order to avoid the opposition. The German Chancellor believed that "there would have been no turmoil in Europe if France itself had installed the bases for launching missiles in the countries that it considered particularly favourable in view of their

102. Ibid; p.226.
geographical and political situation, like Zaire...and Gabon."[104]

This may be a good reason for Giscard to give green signal for the French initiative in regard to build up a missile testing base in Zaire. But it should not be forgotten that France could not fully rely upon Germany. The OTRAG mission in Zaire might have prompted the French decision to have its own base in the country where it enjoyed tremendous politico-military clout. Fode Amadou cogently writes that France yearned to build up its own exclusive missile launching paraphernalia in Zaire as "it was not a question, in effect, for Giscard, to appear letting Germany to outwit him in the region with the OTRAG...And if Giscard had given his consent, it was for several reasons: France, which wanted to project a genuine African image of itself, found itself to be the most fervent supporter of the puppets of the UNITA-FNLA-FLEC that were associated with the destabilization of Angola, the country enjoying a great prestige in the African public opinion, and in one way or the other, a non-negligible commercial partner of South Africa, in particular, in the domain of the armament. It would not have been thus wise for France to let the actual power of missile fire to be controlled by a neighbour which had in past become a dangerous African rival, and still remains to be so in the shadow."[105]

Hence, just in the aftermath of the Shaba I France had begun negotiations with Mobutu to launch the project in some suitable area. This was the most appropriate time to extract concessions

105. Ibid;
from the Zairian leader as he was also willing to demonstrate his gratitude. According to Fode Amadou of Afrique-Asie: "The bases of the project had been laid in May 1977, just after the logistic support accorded by the French government to the Zairian President, Mobutu, to subdue the first upheaval of Shaba. Mobutu, who had already complemented it, that he had 'never any problems with France for buying arms', could only render a favourable audience to this suggestion, which should have the merit, in addition to the fact of motivating his allies to get him out of any trouble in the least opportunity, of fetching him comfortable revenues."[106]

However, the project appeared to crystallize only after the Shaba II which had unambiguously cemented the Franco-Zairian ties. Now Mobutu could be wooed to concede any French proposal. A consortium of the French societies, with the financial guarantees by the French government picked up the gauntlet to build up a 'base d'essis de missiles' in Zaire. "The experts entrusted with the technical part of the project would have desired that the terrain is situated on the parallel which passes approximately by Matadi and Kananga, via Tschikapa, at 5° in the south of the Equator, in the north of the Angolan frontier."[107]

The Matadi-Kananga site was actually selected due to certain specific considerations. France had also entered into an accord with Gabon to set up a similar base there. Already France had a missile launching base in French Guyana. And all these bases were to be quite around Equator and were envisaged to play

107. Ibid;
roles of greater strategic magnitude. Fode Amadou dwells upon the importance of these bases as follows: "Obviously, the military objective at first, these countries near the Equator constituting the best terrains for launching the missiles - it is to note that Kourou (French Guyana) is situated at 5° in the north of Equator like Matadi-Kananga at 5° in the south and that Gabon also happens to be just under the Equator. The site of Gabon and Zaire permits moreover a surveillance, within the range of missiles, of the whole of Africa, from the north to the south and from the east to the west. Next the economic objective, the southern zone being, as we know, particularly rich in minerals of all sorts that France knows to exploit and protect well. Finally, the political objective, France desiring well to show to its African 'friends' that it is capable of succouring them at the least call, hence the necessity to reinforce its military potential on the continent."[108]

In matters of credits, and commercial exchanges between France and Zaire, the years following the Shaba crises have been marked by greater cohesion and reciprocity. By early 1980s "the French financial and commercial loans to Zaire increase each to 440 millions and to 174 millions of dollars, well respectively 15% and 16% of the total of the credits to Zaire. France comes in the first position among the commercial creditors and it is the second country having agreed to provide long term financial loans to Zaire."[109]

The commercial interactions have also considerably

augmented between the two countries. In 1978 France's imports from Zaire cost 670.3 millions French francs, but they escalated to 715 millions FF in 1983 with little variation in between. In case of French exports, an upward trend was noticed. In 1978, the French exports to Zaire verged around 517.4 millions FF, but it pounced to 782 millions FF in 1983, slowly tilting the balance of payment in favour of France. Table C shows these changes. In 1981 France reached the second rung in the hierarchy of the major suppliers to Zaire, after Belgium, with a share to the tune of 17% in the total Zairian imports. Table D depicts these developments.

3. Impact On The Western Interests

In second half of 70s Zaire scrambled "to get out of the economic pit which it dug by borrowing excessively abroad during the heady days of rising copper prices (1972-74). The fall in the price of copper in 1974 was compounded by ill-conceived nationalisation plans in 1973-74 and the lack of a coordinated management structure."

[110] The situation was quite gloomy. The country which enjoyed self-sufficiency in agriculture at the time of independence now imported an estimated $300 m. of foodgrains a year. A 5 percent negative growth rate featured the GDP for 1976-77. Manufacturing industry was crippled running at one-third of capacity due to chronic shortage of spare parts and raw materials. Foreign exchange had become tight and "only dribs and drabs of foreign aid bump up the falling receipts for mineral, diamond and coffee exports."[111]

### TABLE A

**The French Military Cooperation Aid**

( IN MILLIONS FRENCH FRANCS )

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1977</th>
<th>1978</th>
<th>1979</th>
<th>1980</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aid in personnel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- personnel for the military tech. assistance</td>
<td>163.4</td>
<td>204.3</td>
<td>212.5</td>
<td>236.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- military training</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>65.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>184.6</td>
<td>246.9</td>
<td>258.7</td>
<td>301.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid in material</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- aid to the national armies</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>93.4</td>
<td>139.6</td>
<td>215.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- military equipments</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>133.4</td>
<td>209.6</td>
<td>277.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>262.7</td>
<td>380.3</td>
<td>468.3</td>
<td>578.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Strategie Afrique, Moyen-Orient, No.8, October 1980

(Cited in Tricontinental, p.107)

### TABLE B

Major French Arms purchases by African countries in 1980 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td>76.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCA</td>
<td>98.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Volta</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zaire</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Pascal Chaigneau: La Politique Militaire de la France en Afrique, CHEAM, Paris, 1984.
### TABLE C
**EVOLUTION OF THE FRANCO-ZAIRIAN EXCHANGES (IN MILLION FF)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French exports to Zaire</td>
<td>-517.4</td>
<td>625.1</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French imports from Zaire</td>
<td>-670.3</td>
<td>703.1</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>718</td>
<td>715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>-152.9</td>
<td>-77</td>
<td>-206</td>
<td>-68</td>
<td>+54</td>
<td>+67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE:** The Direction of Trade, IMF, 1982.

### TABLE D
**RANK AND SHARE OF THE MAJOR EXPORTERS TO ZAIRE (IN %) BETWEEN 1980 TO 1982**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>1981</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benelux Countries</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US/Canada</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Germany</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other OECD Countries</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
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<td>7.6%</td>
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**SOURCE:** The Direction of Trade, IMF, 1982.
The foreign debts continued to mount, and "Zaire at the end of 1977 owed $2.64 billion (plus interest) with presumably $900 million when future commitments were disbursed. For 1978, 1979 and 1980 Zaire faces annual debt service payments of $470-485 million yearly. It has neither trade nor budgetary surplus nor significant reserve holdings....the patterns of corruption and the poor budgetary and productive performances that created the debt situation continue. Thus, half a billion a year or more in new foreign support or massive debt scheduling or a de facto moratorium will be necessary to maintain even the present state of disintegration. This presumes that Zaire actually pays its debts. Unfortunately for those involved, Zaire is not doing this."[112]

Such a murky scenario had appalled the Western creditors. They had begun to feel the pinch of the ill-conceived lending mania in 1973 and 1975 when they "rode the copper boom into Zaire on a scale far beyond common sense. Local and international greed worked symbiotically."[113] In fact, by late 1975 itself the bankers were in dismay when Zaire fell neck-deep into "an unprecedented $104 million " in debt service payment arrears.[114] However, both the Western creditors "and Zaire were anxious to fend off bankruptcy." Rather Western bankers were prone to buy Mobutu's argument that "the Zairian financial problem was purely of short term and had been principally provoked by the fall in copper prices; it sufficed to throw up a

113. Ibid;
114. Ibid;
bailey bridge over the turbulent but narrow torrent of insolvency to help Zaire cross to the abundance lying on the far shore."[115]

Nevertheless, they prescribed the IMF involvement as a remedy for the Zairian debt malady which Mobutu did not wish to swallow. "Mobutu was anxious to obtain a reprieve on the debt without passing through the IMF, to which he had a strong antipathy; its conditions were likely to be too stringent, and he had privately pledged in 1967 that he would never again commit himself to following the fund's prescriptions."[116]

Mobutu explored all probable avenues of potential support and resorted to all conceivable measures to shun the IMF tentacles. But finally, "Mobutu found that all roads led to the IMF. The private banks insisted on such an approach, believing that only through intervention by the fund could sufficient external leverage be assured to enforce economic policies which offered some hope recovering their loans."[117] Ultimately, Mobutu had no option but to capitulate to the IMF. IMF along with private banks led by the US Citibank tried to mobilize aid to bail out Zaire from the crisis. "Zaire agreed to a 42 percent devaluation of its currency, a limit of 20 percent on wage increase, and a sharp curtailment in government expenditure."[118]

But all these generous efforts were not of much consequences as far as the strengthening of the Zairian economy was concerned.

115. Young & Turner, n.28; p.379.
116. Ibid;
117. Ibid; p.380.
118. Ibid; p.381.
The venal foreign exchange haemorrhage by the presidential brotherhood continued unabated sabotaging the scheme to plug the loopholes. And by 1977 both the IMF and private Western bankers were forced to suspend their endeavours to mobilize loans for Zaire. As a matter of fact, IMF rescinded "Zaire's eligibility for higher tranche credit, noting that the country was not meeting arrears, and that indeed it had no notion of what Zaire was doing."[119] Young and Turner categorically write that :"By 1977 the old illusion in Zaire and the West that the economic crisis was a passing epiphenomenon had been thoroughly dispelled. The result in 1977-78, was a curious mixture of temporizing and of escalating demands for reforms, yet no real willingness on the part of either public or private external lending agencies to extend major new commitments."[120]

Nevertheless, Western bankers and the two international agencies, the IMF and the World Bank, continued to persuade Mobutu to undertake fiscal reforms and provide an integrated program for development which could serve as a basis for new credit. Mobutu had been a little bit sobered by the Shaba I and was willing to heed the advice, but not in toto. In November 1977 at the MPR party Congress, he pronounced a Recovery Plan which he himself christened as Mobutu Plan saying :"Given that I am the guarantor of the well-being of the Zairian people, I propose to you a Recovery Plan, which I call, without demagoguery, the Mobutu Plan, because, not only have I conceived it, but further I intend to personally apply it and see to its success."[121]

119. Young & Turner, n.28; p.383.
120. Ibid; p.382.
121. Ibid; p.383.
According to Young and Turner, such pronouncement was a mere piece of classic Mobutist rhetoric, and was taken by the world at large with a pinch of salt. They say: "At this point there literally was no Mobutu Plan, in the sense of a document setting forth Mobutu's conception. What eventually emerged from the Ministry of Planning was a call for $1 billion in new foreign aid, bolstered by a vague collation of pious aspirations such as better transport, higher agricultural production, decentralized decision-making, and improved administration. As administrative reshuffles, redrawn organizational charts, and verbal affirmations of beneficent intent were aging nags which had done innumerable laps around the racetrack of Mobutist rhetoric before, the credibility of this new program was nil."[122]

A tug of war continued between Mobutu and Western bankers; the former not much willing to restructure the Zairian economy to eliminate corruption and to preclude the illegal siphoning of foreign exchange by the elites, as they formed the very raison-d'etre of his regime, while the latter determined to foist fiscal reforms upon Zaire to nurse its economy back to good health so that their debts could be recovered. However, Mobutu always managed to outwit the latter. But the "May War (Shaba II) in the vital southern mining province of Shaba delivered a crippling blow to an already shaky economy" [123] and humbled President Mobutu leaving not much latitude for his manoeuvring.

In fact, the Shaba II clenched the issue. Mobutu was trapped and became suitably susceptible to the Western pressures to carry

122. Young & Turner, n.28; p.383.
out all that the IMF and Western bankers dictated, to facilitate the repayment of foreign debt. Mark Webster echoes this very idea when he says: "Nonetheless, there is general agreement among economists that the first slender shafts of light are penetrating Zaire's economic gloom. The Western creditors are thought to have taken maximum advantage of the plight in which President Mobutu found himself during the summer to insist on far reaching economic and political reforms which had previously been unacceptable to the government. The IMF had been negotiating for some time with Zaire about a stabilisation plan but the Zairians had apparently baulked at the scale of sacrifice they would have to make. For as one economist put it: 'When you talk about putting Zaire's economic house in order, you are not thinking of a lick of paint but new foundations.'[124]

Such vulnerability on the part of Mobutu, and the Western intention to derive maximum gains from Mobutu's predicament resulted in the Conference of Paris on June 5, 1978 which was attended by five Western nations: UK, US, West Germany, Belgium and France. In order to realize its objective the West harnessed its policy to Zaire based "on two major considerations. The first is to maintain a regime in Kinshasa which will provide a bulwark against the spread of Soviet influence in Central and Southern Africa. The second is to recoup some of the estimated $2 to $3 billion in accumulated debt and to clear the mounting arrears of interest and principal on government and commercial bank loans."[125]

125. Ibid;
The Paris Conference mulled over both considerations. The participants felt that President Mobutu should nurture cordial relations with the neighbouring countries so that the opponents to the regime might be starved of politico-military support from them. Marches Tropicaux wrote that all the 5 nations "have underlined the necessity for General Mobutu to undertake a vigorous and sustained diplomatic action to ameliorate relations with his immediate neighbours, especially Angola and Zambia, and explore the possibilities of mediation which certain African states can offer, such as Nigeria, whose diplomacy is employed with perseverance to attempt to smoothen the differences and to avoid any intervention of foreign powers on the continent, and Sudan, directly interested in the maintenance of the stability of the Central region of Africa."[126] Probably, such advice of the Western leaders paved the meeting of June 6, 1978 between President Mobutu and the Zambian chief, Kenneth Kaunda, at Lubumbashi in Zaire. President Kaunda "who, having met three days earlier the chief of the Angolan state at Luanda, could have been solicited to interpose himself to facilitate a reconciliation between Zaire and Angola."[127]

However, the main focus of the Conference was on the economic recovery of Zaire so that the Western bankers could get back their debts. The final communique of the Paris Conference unambiguously manifested it as follows: "A meeting of high German, American, Belgian, British and French functionaries was held in Paris on Monday, June 5. The high functionaries studied

127. Ibid;
the actual problems of Zaire, aggravated by the events of Shaba, within the larger framework of the preoccupations of these five countries on the subject of the independence, the economic development, the integrity and the security of the African countries... They examined the following questions: the conditions on which the aid should be furnished to Zaire, which would allow it to retrieve its economy; the indispensable measures for its recovery and its social and economic progress."[128]

Moreover, the Rubicon was crossed at the Brussels conference held on June 14-15, 1978, and attended by eleven Western countries and two international organizations (IMF and World Bank). The conference reviewed "another shopping list of development projects and other short and medium term needs to meet the new crisis."[129] But in actuality, it was purported to enable Zaire's international creditors to assume sweeping powers to control the country's banking and financial system as a condition for giving aid to prevent the collapse of the economy so that their loans could be extracted, even though gradually.[130] Zaire's creditors were also anxious to see that the fresh loans should not meet the past fate and "management of the country's internal financial affairs should ensure that money is spent on the purposes for which it is officially intended, and not misused for private gain, as has often been the case in the past."[131]

129. Gran, n.112.
At this juncture, the Western creditors were sure to impose all sorts of conditions on Mobutu as the latter had been cornered by the adverse circumstances. Unlike in past, Mobutu was willing to concede that "the problem of security of his country is linked to the plan of recovery."[132] Mobutu toured West Europe from June 9 to 14, 1978 to express his gratitude to the countries "which had offered him aid and assistance during the war of Shaba."[133] The tour was also "the inception of an economic offensive", and President Mobutu appealed to the Belgian government "to take the initiative for a Western financial aid in favour of his country."[134]

This obliging penchant of Mobutu denoted that he was now convinced that he had to dance to the Western tune, and his past whims of snubbing suggestions had to be shelved. According to the monthly Demain l'Afrique for several months "the negotiations had been pursued between the principal Western countries and Kinshasa. But President Mobutu Sese Seko, it seems, manifested reticences about complying with all the conditions of the club of the riches. No doubt, the second war of Shaba had come as an opportunity to force him to concede, in the proportion, since his power, already seriously shaken, was reduced to their mercy this time."[135]

At the Brussels conference of June 14-15, 1978, the Zairian delegation led by M.Bokara W'Oudangela, put up a proposal which "vaguely conceived $1 billion investment plan over the next two

134. Ibid.
years."[136] But their appeal fell on deaf ears. Zaire could only obtain immediate pledges for "some $116 million in short term aid"[137] to meet "les besoins de premiere urgence."[138] "The aid thus consented to Zaire is far from attaining the volume desired by the representatives. Besides, the problem of supplying motor-fuel, certain spare parts and primary materials is far from being resolved, the Western countries having conserved for their emergency aid an essentially humanitarian character, destined to provide to the immediate requirements of the Zairian population. This aid will be taken and distributed under the direct control of the Western diplomatic representations in Zaire, obviously in accord with the Zairian authorities. The International Red Cross could, as it has been used to, participate in the operations of the distribution of the provisions and the medicines."

But as said above, the primordial concern of the Western powers was to retard the deteriorating debt service payment pace of Zaire, and hence such paltry aid pledge was the logical corollary. By "1978 delinquent payments amounted to at least $800 million and were increasing by $125 million per quarter."[140] Thus, the Brussels conference chiefly concentrated on chalking out a strategy to recover the loans. Zaire was undoubtedly assured to get financial support to actualize "Mobutu Plan" to some extent, but at greater costs. According to Guy Gran "what was really going on was an exchange of economic sovereignty by

136. Gran, n.112; p.22.
137. Ibid.
139. Ibid.
140. Young & Turner, n.28; p.383.
Mobutu in return for his continued access to a smaller piece of the spoils. Mobutu got an international show of support and the potential for continued rule."[141]

In exchange for such "ballon d'oxygene" [142] Zaire agreed "to impose a strict new import licensing system and place its public finances under the supervision of outside experts as a first step towards re-ordering its troubled economy. It has been agreed that an IMF nominee, assisted by a staff of about six outside experts will take over as principal director of the Zaire Central Bank from mid-August. He will have wide authority over the operation of the country's credit and payments mechanisms...Zaire has also consented to the appointment of another outside official as principal controller of its finance ministry, with special responsibility for public spending, budgetary receipts and the running of public sector enterprises...The import licensing, which is expected to take effect as soon as possible, is considered a vital step towards staunching the heavy drain on the country's depleted foreign exchange reserves, and ensuring that future imports are economically justified."[143]

According to Demain l'Afrique, all these measures imposed upon Zaire were the progeny of the ideas of the Belgian Foreign Minister, M.Henri Simonet. They had crystallized into a confidential draft, called "Plan de relance economique et financiere du Zaire"[144] which was circulated among the...

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141. Gran, n.112; p.22.
participants of the Brussels conference of June 14-15. This draft plan actually provided the crux for the entire facade of declarations at the conference and proved to be the sacrosanct manacle for the Zairian economy which Mobutu could not refuse to wear. Demain l'Afrique sarcastically, but graphically commented upon the nature of this draft Plan saying: "Plan of the economic and financial recovery of Zaire: Under this austere title, a voluminous document some three hundred pages, of a fastidious arrival like most of the products of the universal technocratic literature. Nevertheless, this report constitutes the masterpiece device conceived by the Western powers to bring under their tutelage the entire economy of one of the biggest and richest countries of Africa. In this context are contained the conditions that the club of the capitals of Western Europe and North America want to impose upon Kinshasa which, since then, happens to find itself placed under a veritable American-European condominium. It will be the price for the financial aid that the givers of the funds will accept to accord to the Zairian authorities seized by the throat... To the reader of the 'Plan of the economic and financial recovery of Zaire', the impression is that the Westerners, singularly the Belgians, have treated the affair as if it is the matter of a province of Belgium. Point by point, the conduct to be followed is dictated to Kinshasa with a grand luxury of details."[145]

A perusal of certain paragraphs of the draft Plan leads to similar inferences. All purport, purpose and proposal of the Plan

boil down to only one point, viz: To infuse sufficient stamina in the Zairian economy in order to milk out Western loans to the maximum. The Plan does not at all envisage any measure to bolster the economy for the sake of the Zairian masses. Regarding Industries, the draft in its Chapter IV says: "It is important to preserve the mining sector in Zaire, essential for the equilibrium of foreign trade. It is indispensable to ensure a strict control of the exploitations if the level of production in regression since 1975 is to be raised. The Plan would also anticipate measures, purported to favour new investments by which the means essential for self-financing should come...The general problem of the investments in the industrial sector (notably the energy sector) should constitute the object of very strict control if Zaire has to avoid an increase in the external debt and as well the continuing financial disequilibrium. In short term, it is no more conceivable for Zaire to anticipate the financing of the projects whose effects on the production and/or on the exports will not be immediate."[146]

With regard to imports, it enjoins that "the plan should anticipate the maintenance of the possibilities of reimbursing the consolidated foreign debts. Moreover, as the outlays for imports are limited, a very strict priority should be established....only the importation of the commodities of consumption of absolute necessity and constituting an incompressible demand, should be authorised. Strict controls should be also ensured so that these commodities of consumption reach their destinations for which they had been

authorised."[147] About the foreign finances the draft affirmed that "as already mentioned, it is important that a balance of payments allows Zaire to meet its obligations of reimbursing the consolidated foreign debts."[148] The most stunning provision of the draft enjoined that "a program to reinforce the financial controls is indispensable in the domain of the public administration. This program could be sustained by the arrangements of international cooperation... The plan of economic development should have to conceive a system of coordination concerning the international cooperation. An organization of coordination of the foreign assistance should have been created."[149]

The Brussels Conference meticulously translated these proposals into reality by compelling Zaire to accept them. One author considers this Conference "as a recall of the Conference of Berlin of 1885."[150] The French weekly, Le Point, observed trenchantly: "Twelve Western countries, assisted by IMF, the World Bank and the EEC have in effect instituted a very sophisticated form of the neo-colonialism brutally calling upon Zaire to undertake the reforms essential to revitalize its sick economy."[151]

Such allegations apparently embarrassed the Zairian leaders, and they spurned off the idea of neo-colonialism being thrust upon their economy. "These measures, accepted by Zaire, should not be considered as a manifestation of neo-colonialism. Such

147. Demain l'Afrique, n.144.
148.&149. Ibid;
150. Kalubi, n.133.
opinion was held out by the chief of the Zairian delegation at Brussels, but rather as a 'simple international cooperation employed by the friendly countries and the international organizations.' It is not for the first time, M. Bokara W'Ondogela emphasized, that IMF has delegated experts to the State departments of the countries which have asked for them."[152] But this rationalization did not exude from the deep conscience of the Zairian representative as he was aware that "it is the first time that such experts would have real powers of decision-making."[153]

A second Brussels Conference was convened on November 9-10, 1978 to further intensify the Western surveillance over the Zairian economy, and as well to probe whether the first conference measures were implemented or not. Marches Tropicaux of November 17, commented: "It is true that this second conference of Brussels was convened essentially with the objective to examine, at first, the resultants of the emergency aid, and if they had taken place properly to accord new aid and then, perhaps especially, the report presented by the Zairian delegates on the measures taken to meet the conditions stipulated by the West in last June. If they appeared satisfactory, then the Western countries and the international institutions would study the demands of credits and aids presented by Zaire for the realization of the 'Mobutu' plan."[154]

Zaire had largely complied with the instructions of the Western powers at the First Brussels Conference in June.

153. Ibid;
According to Ne Mboma: "Kinshasa has taken into consideration all the instructions, then edicted, to have to undertake profound economic and political reforms. In order to relieve the country of the heavy expenses resulting from the larval conflict with Angola, President Mobutu Sese Seko initiated to reconcile with Luanda; and simultaneously he organized the return of the Zairian refugees and declared the release of the political detenus... On the economic front, the Zairians have taken the maximum of chances in their game before presenting themselves to the 'oral examination' to which their friends had decided to submit them: on the IMF proposition, they had accepted to nominate at the head of the Bank of Zaire, M. Erwin Blumenthal. This former expert of the Bundesbank (the institute of emission of the Federal Germany) had been, moreover, naturally incorporated in the Zairian delegation (for the IIInd Brussels conference). In less than two months after his arrival in Kinshasa, every train of the measures was placed on the track: reorganization of the traditionally 'budgetivore' administrations, the public and private enterprises, reestablishment of the grand economic equilibriums by the mastery of the salaried mass, the encadrement of the credit, the control of the management of the public finances with the creation of the 'Direction of the Payment', an office of the customs. As for these devices, they will be henceforth more strongly than before, centralized at the National Bank. In order to contain the growth of the foreign debt, Zaire only resorts to borrowing with the greatest caution.... But the most significant measure, rendered public a week before the Brussels meeting,
would have been, without any doubt, the devaluation of the Zaire, the money unit, tied since 1976 to the Special Drawing Rights (SDR). It fell, at the official rate, by 20% in its value. It was necessary, without delay, to reduce the inflationary pressure, to reestablish the expected situation of the balance of payments, to increase the revenues of the enterprises and especially to avoid the frauds in the exports, encouraged by the enormous unwedging existing between the official rate and the free market rate of the national money."[155]

In the light of such performances of Zaire, the Western powers, at the second Brussels conference, agreed to offer more financial support to the Mobutu regime, but still the condition for more vigorous implementation of the reforms persisted. The president of the conference, M. Andre Erueman, declared that the participants at the conference have given the "assurances that they would participate in financing the accord of stabilization to be concluded with the IMF, as far as the reforms of management of the Zairian economy would be pursued."[156]

These facts unambiguously denote that the Western grip over the Zairian economy continued to tighten step by step, and Mobutu rather bartered his economic sovereignty for Western support to keep himself saddled in power. No doubt, prior to 1975 the Zairian elites had macabrely marauded the national wealth under the patronage of Mobutu. But such syndrome precipitated only financial anarchy in Zaire, which coupled with political turmoil.

156. Marches Tropicaux, Nov.17, 1978; p.3009.
paved the path for Western usurpation of the Zairian resources, ironically under the very tutelage of President Mobutu himself. It is an axiom that such predicament was the creation of Mobutu himself. Notwithstanding his strong yearning to get rid of Western dictates, his whims for personal opulence and total grip over Zaire's polity spawned the vicious cobweb of political and financial bankruptcy pushing the country into West's neo-colonial lap. Guy Gran opines: "Mobutu brought much of the chaos on himself, but the West used his weakness to hasten a process of recolonization. The balance of control over Zaire's surplus has swung away from the national elite toward the international interests between 1976 and 1978. This relative 'success' is probably the largest systemic reason for the ongoing Western support of Mobutu. Meantime the paper shuffling lends a veneer of legitimacy and responsibility to the events. But looked at carefully the papers are a charade. The quantitative targets go unmet, and the qualitative ones are so amorphous that decisions thereon are purely capricious political acts." [157]

157. Gran, n.112; p.22.