CHAPTER II

ZAIRE UNDER MOBUTU

MOBUTU'S POLITICAL ASCENDANCY

CONCEPT OF AUTHENTICITY

MOBUTU AND ARMY

MEANS OF REPRESSSION

ECONOMIC SCENARIO UNDER MOBUTU

OPPOSITION TO THE MOBUTU REGIME
This Chapter discusses first the political ascendancy of Mobutu and the various means he has used to keep himself in power; second, the economic scenario of Zaire under the regime; and third, the nature of opposition to Mobutu's regime in the years since he came to power.

1. Mobutu's political ascendancy

Mobutu was born in 1930 in the Equator Province of Zaire. He joined the colonial army 'La Force publique' and was "discharged several years later with the rank of Sergeant."[1] In 1958, he went to Belgium to study journalism which opened adventurous avenues for him. By then the struggle for independence in Congo had assumed greater magnitude under the banner of Le Mouvement national Congolais which fascinated Mobutu. He became a supporter of Patrice Lumumba who made him his Private Secretary.

Lumumba called Mobutu "mon fils Joseph, and appointed him secretary of state to the Prime Minister as a reward for his loyalty."[2] His infatuation did not stop here, but climaxed in the appointment of Mobutu as Chief of Staff of the Armée national congolaise, which was created in the face of the dismantling of La Force publique due to its mutinous conduct. But it is held that this catapulting of Mobutu to such powerful post "was a great mistake on the part of Lumumba for most of his close associates had advanced the name of the more 'reliable' General Maurice Mpolo. However, Lumumba was still blinded by

2. Ibid;
the seeming allegiance of his 'l'enfant cheri', a misjudgement that was later to cost him his life." [3]

Initially, Mobutu might have shown deference and dedication to Lumumba. But with lapse of time his outlook and intention changed. He started shifting his allegiance from Lumumba to new ones. One of Lumumba's earliest associates, Cleophas Kamitatu, divulged that Mobutu hobnobbed with the Belgian secret service which had wooed him in Brussels during January and February of 1960 to enlist information about the stand the Congolese politicians would take on the issues under negotiation between them and Belgium during the Round Table Conference. [4]

It is held that Mobutu was groomed by the CIA during the Congo crises in the larger interests of the West. This allegation was made in an article published in the New York Times in April 1966. The article read: "Starting from scratch because the Belgians had forbidden Americans even to meet with Congolese officials, the CIA dispersed its agents to learn Congolese politics from the bush on up, to recruit likely leaders and to finance their bid for power. Capable of quickly gathering information from all sources, of buying and disbursing funds without bureaucratic restraints imposed on other governmental agencies, the CIA soon found Joseph Mobutu, Victor Nendaka and Albert Ndele. Their eventual emergence as President, minister of transportation and head of the National Bank, respectively proved a tribute to the American judgement and tactics." [5]

The charge of Mobutu's collusion with the CIA was strengthened when he staged the first coup d'etat of 14 September, 1960. Lumumba had unequivocally denounced him in a press release on 15 September, 1960 stating: "Colonel Mobutu, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, has been corrupted by the imperialists so as to carry out a coup d'etat against the legal and popularly elected government." [6]

The CIA patronized the entire Binza Group led by General Mobutu. The Binza Group "was a politically powerful clique which derived its name from the fabulous Kinshasa suburb where its principal members had their private residence and its power stemmed from their control of the central state machinery and especially its key organs, then as now closely linked to external sources of assistance and pressure: the military (Mobutu), the security (Nendaka), internal affairs (Kandolo), the National Bank (Ndele), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bomboko)." [7]

This group gradually eliminated the anti-American elements in the government, launching the process of abetting the assassination of Lumumba in January 1961, and removing "the most prominent Lumumbists from the political scene, and with them, the 'Communist menace', which their presence evoked in American foreign policy-makers." [8] The process climaxed in the coup d'etat of November 24, 1965 staged by Mobutu against the background of rivalry between Tshombe and Kasavubu.

Weissman, the most thorough student of the US Central

8. Ibid;
Intelligence Agency (CIA) role in Zaire, concludes that the agency was "involved" in the coup, but without specifying in exactly what way or to what degree.[9] The involvement is further proved by the fact that the CIA Kinshasa station chief Lawrence Devlin, who had developed an intimate relationship with Mobutu in 1959 when both were in Brussels, had played a crucial covert role in Zairian affairs through the Binza group in 1960-62, and had returned for a second term of duty in Zaire not long before the coup - a fact which many observers saw as circumstantial evidence of American complicity in the coup.[10]

The political scenario of Zaire, prevailing at the time, helped the coup to be portrayed as "an action taken upon the collective decision of the military high command to put an end to a deteriorating state of affairs created by the inability of the politicians to govern effectively. Thus, Mobutu could be shown as the leader of a 'neutral' group of arbitrators, guided by their devotion to duty and country rather than as an interested party."[11]

The Congolese people were cajoled by the circumstances, which made the eruption of a civil war imminent due to the escalating feud between the supporters of Tshombe and Kasavubu,[12] to accept the justification by Mobutu that

11. Ntalaja, n.7; p.601.
12. Kabwit, n.1; p.385.
"his action was not a military coup, but a duty performed to save the country from anarchy and chaos."[13] In fact, the pre-coup regime of Congo conspicuously presented the spectacle of "a veritable Hobbesian state of nature" that featured life "as nasty, brutal and short" which could be wound up only by the Hobbesian panacea, and hence Mobutu probably held out the prospect to the masses of resurrecting a leviathan state "from the ashes of the first republic."[14]

Mobutu's endeavours to erect a leviathan state upon the still surviving centralized and authoritarian paraphernalia of the colonial state did help people overcome the fear of a disastrous civil war. He promised a return to civilian rule 'after five years of military rule.'[15]

Even military rule did not materialize in the aftermath of the coup. "No military council was formed, and the military high command ceased to act as a body- if, indeed, it even functioned as such beyond the early official press releases- as soon as Mobutu felt secure enough to act on his own. General Leonard Mulamba, the only army officer besides Mobutu to serve in the post-coup government, was dismissed from his post as Prime Minister within a year in October 1966."[16]

In a bid to enhance personal authority and bring about stability in Zaire Mobutu inducted certain significant changes in the state machinery which JC Willame identifies as the emergence

15. Ntalaja, n.7; p.601.
16. Ibid;
of "Caesarism and bureaucracy to achieve centralized rule,"[17] and which helped to checkmate the existing chaotic state affairs. The subsequent years became a witness to the proliferating concentration of power in the hands of one man, Mobutu.

Mobutu ruled by decree which meant the blighting of the legislative functions "of the elected National Assembly which was reduced to a consultative body, and then adjourned before the promulgation of the new Constitution."[18] Even he abolished the office of the Prime Minister in October 1966 saying that it had become 'cumbersome', but it is thought that Mobutu could not bear with this apparent source of rivalry and intended "to be both Head of Government and State."[19] Besides, he propped up "a centralized administrative apparatus run by university-trained technocrats and by senior civil servants, thus reducing the independent role of government ministeries." [20] He even took over direct control of the Ministry of National Defence and the security police.

Mobutu followed a concerted programme to initiate reforms that could build political stability and tighten his grip over the state apparatus. The revised Constitution of 1967 introduced a unicameral system, superseding the previous two parliamentary bodies. He eventually demolished all political parties in Zaire, when in May 1967, 'le partie unique' was created and consecrated in the name of Le Mouvement populaire de la revolution (MPR). The

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18. Kabwit, n.1; p.386.
19. Ibid;
MPR was propagated to be an all-embracing political party in the country but it was "less a unifying factor for nationalism than a huge political intelligence network, specially designed to keep Mobutu in power."[21]

Kabwit writes: "Indeed, the centralization of institutions and the depoliticisation of the masses seem to have been Mobutu's formula for restructuring the Congolese state."[22] He succeeded in building a highly autocratic edifice of government around himself and assumed personal control of "every decision from the publication of a book to the granting of an import license, giving his ministers less and less responsibility."[23]

The remarkable accomplishment of Mobutu lay in the elimination of the powerful Binza group which posed obstacles to his supreme authority. One by one, he managed to eliminate the so-called "patrimonial rulers"[24]: Justin Momboko from the Equator, who had served as foreign minister under almost every government since Lumumba; Victor Nendaka from Kwilu, chief of the Surete (the secret service); Joseph Nsinga, a minister of state; and Albert Ndele, governor of the National Bank.[25]

"Mobutu's attack on this group was, no doubt, a reflection of the worsening situation in Zaire and of his growing unpopularity. His antagonistic stance towards Momboko and Nendaka, in particular, was a clear proof of his sense of insecurity. These two figures had been the most important men in

22. Kabwit, n.1; p.386.
23. Ogunbadejo, n.21; p.223.
24. Kabwit, n.1; p.386.
Zairian politics and were often described as 'les inamovibles' in the local press. Mobutu knew their power and had, for years, played one off against the other until in the end, he decided to remove them from the government."[26]

But Mobutu always tried to maintain cordial relations with his top governmental and military subordinates. He was quite generous to them and shared the copper booty with his elite corps. While eliciting loyalty, Mobutu did not yield to any scruples in employing extremely harsh measures when loyalty was "not forthcoming".[27] Any plot to overthrow his regime invited instant reprisal.

In 1967, the former Premier Evarist Kimba and three other ex-ministers were publically guillotined for hatching a plot to topple the regime. In 1969 about twenty students of Kinshasa Lovanium University succumbed to police bullets, when they staged a demonstration, and the entire student body knuckled under military discipline for some time. In 1970 Mobutu pronounced amnesty to all those who had manoeuvred various rebellions of the post-independence era, and welcomed them back home. But the overture turned to be a bait leading them into the snare of Mobutu's secret police so that their liquidation could be consummated with convenience.[28]

"The key figures that returned were dealt with the typical Zairian fashion: Christopher Gbenye, former leader of the Popular Republic of the Congo in Stanleyville, Nicholas Olenga, one of

the leaders of the rebellion, and Jean Willy Tshimbiila, a former Congolese politician who had come back from exile in Cairo, were tried for subversion and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment, with Olenga receiving ten years. Pierre Mulele, who had been living in exile in Brazzaville, across the Zairian border and only lured back with the declaration of amnesty and promises of protection, was, soon after his return, murdered in a most horrifying manner." [29]

The CND (Centre National de Documentation), Mobutu’s secret police, has been instrumental in the preservation of his regime. It maintains a comprehensive dossier on all top officials "who generally indulge in bribery more as a way of life than as a way of crime." [30] Thus, Mobutu has access to incriminating materials about his surrogates, which equip him with adequate implements to subject them to harsh legal justice. Besides, being "a master political chess-player" [31] Mobutu knows the game to juggle and shuffle his top administrative and army pawns to preclude them from building any threatening local bastion of support.

His regional Commissioners, somewhat equivalent to the American state governors, get assignment outside their tribal spheres, where they cannot have personal bases of support. This criterion is equally applicable "to their subordinates right down to a minor functionary level." [32] In case of military, Mobutu keeps on playing one military officer against another.

30. Adelman, n.27; p.41.
31. Ibid; p.42.
32. Ibid;
Hence, "the normally rigid command of lines of authority and areas of functional responsibility are deeply blurred in Zaire." [33] This does not allow them to have attachment to any particular command or zone where they can befriend others.

With his manoeuvring knack [34] Mobutu had managed by 1970 to gain full "personal ascendancy over the system he fashioned." [35] No doubt, he was often susceptible to Western criticism for his "repressive" policies and personal "extravagance", but he brushed aside such criticism by stating that "Africa with its recent heritage of rule by village chiefs cannot accommodate European or American-style democracy." [36]

Thus, Mobutu was able to liberate himself from the necessity to listen to any counsel "from the old first republic politicians who had backed his rise, ranking army officers, Western diplomats, or international financial advisers. The initial presidential secretariat of young, often radical university graduate technocrats was replaced by courtiers." [37]

Thomas M. Callaghy of Columbia University has analysed the state hierarchy of Mobutu's regime. This hierarchy consists of three main groups. "The first group consists of all top level administrative, political and military officials, and foreign advisers, sometimes called the 'presidential family' (an appropriately patrimonial term), close presidential advisers, all members of the 'royal' councils (Political Bureau and Executive Council), State Commissioners (ministers), field grade military

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33. Adelman, n.27.
34. Kabwit, n.1; p.388.
officers, Regional Commissioners (prefects), key officials in the parastatal sector, and many of both People's Commissioners (members of the Legislative Council) and Central Committee members. It also includes relatives of Mobutu who hold pseudo-political-administrative positions. Within this group those closest to Mobutu have almost unlimited licence to plunder and for the rest the possibilities of the 'politics of appropriation' are wide, and the material prerequisites, formal and informal, are enormous. Most members create their own patron-client network and are a part of another one. Ethnic and regional criteria may be important, but they are not necessarily dominant; loyalty and some competence are also important. The second group is made up of middle level administrative and military officers in Kinshasa. These people aspire to membership of the 'presidential family' and are usually clients in the networks of those who are in it. They also participate in the 'politics of appropriation', but to a somewhat lesser degree. The third group includes the rest of the territorial prefects and military officers in the regions and middle and high level officials in the mostly moribund regional state services."[38]

These ruling groups are relatively fluid, held together by complex yet partially shifting patron-client networks and factions. Of course, entry is guided by relational, ethnic, regional, patron-client, educational and political criteria, but in actuality, "loyalty to Mobutu, the patron of patrons, is,

however, the ultimate requirement for entry and continued membership." [39]

a. Concept of Authenticity

Mobutu's control was not confined only to the state apparatus. He was even able to penetrate the socio-cultural life of the Zairians with the aid of the concept of 'authenticite'.[40] This political doctrine advocated an overhauling of the whole socio-politico-economic and cultural mosaic, institutions and even the perceptions. This led to the symbolic relinquishment of the old Belgian name Congo of the country and the Christian name Joseph Desire Mobutu of the President himself(now Mobutu Sese Seko Kuko Ngbendu Wa Za Banga).[41]

Mobutu himself stated that "Authenticite has made us discover our personality by reaching into the depth of our past for the rich cultural heritage which was left to us by our ancestors. We have no intention of blindly returning to all ancestral customs; rather we would like to choose those which adapt themselves well to modern life, those which encourage progress, and those which create a way of life and thought which are essentially ours." [42]

The core of this doctrine has been to promote an intense economic and cultural nationalism. Authenticite has provided impetus to the Government (1) to order all Zairians to have names

40. Kabwit, n.1; p.389.
41. Ibid;
that refer to their ancestors, (2) to alter the names of cities and streets to eliminate their European nomenclature, (3) to remove all statues that glorified foreigners notably Stanley, King Leopold II, and Queen Elizabeth, (4) to change the fashion code by banning European-style suits and dresses, (5) to greet visiting heads of state with African drum rather than a 21-gun 'colonial' salute, and (6) to urge that all traditional works of art be returned to Zaire so as to inspire contemporary artists.[43] Even a new policy of public dancing and entertainment known as 'animation', and described by MPR cadres as 'the national consecration of our vital force and our arrival at the national spirit' [44] was initiated. But Adelman opines that "basically this involves changing the words of traditional songs and chants so as to praise the President and the national party, rather than the founding ancestors or the goodness of life." [45] The adoption of the name Zaire was the result of this 'authenticite'.

Mobutu's advocacy of authenticity was considered as "a rebellion against one's own dependency and imitativeness."[46]

However, dependency has continued to dog Zaire, and in fact, Western help "has been a continuous and pervasive factor supporting the emergence, consolidation and survival of the Mobutu regime in Zaire. Such support was crucial to Mobutu's control of the armed forces from the earliest days, crucial to

44. Kabwit, n.1, p.390.
45. Ibid;
his first coup in September 1960, crucial to his seizure of full power in 1965 as an African caudillo, crucial to the emergence and consolidation of an absolutist state with its political aristocracy, and crucial to its ability to survive a severe debt crisis" [47] and the Shaba crises of 1977-1978.

Furthermore, during 1974 the personality cult was institutionalised by a decision taken at the crucial meeting of the MPR-Political Bureau in Kinshasa on July 15, 1974. This decision gave birth to the newest doctrine which came to be known as 'Mobutuism', and succinctly defined as "The teachings, thoughts and actions of the President-Founder of the MPR", a phrase equivalent to the Chinese description of Maoism.[48] This decision eventually crystallized in the 1974 Constitution which bestowed a juridical shroud upon the aggregation of Mobutu's personal powers.

The MPR was institutionalised, and it became "the supreme organ of the state, obviously superseding the Constitution of 1967 that had been overwhelmingly approved by the people of Zaire in a referendum." [49] The President headed the MPR, which was now "the nation politically organized", and state was relegated to the background as an appendage of the party. "The President presided over the Council of Ministers, the legislature, the Supreme Judicial Council, as well as the party Political Bureau. In effect, the members of all these bodies were named by the President, whose words and thoughts cumulatively constituted the official doctrine of the country (Mobutuism), and had the force

47. Callaghy, n.38; p.61.
48. Kabwit, n.1; p.391.
49. Ibid;
of law. 'Deviationism' was a constitutional offense. Policy pronouncements formulated in isolation, were increasingly divorced from implementation, and for that matter reality."[50]

b. Mobutu and the Army

The basic power of Mobutu emanated from his control over the 'Les Forces armees zairoises' (FAZ) having more than 45,000 men. These men are all volunteers entrusted with the task to ensure security of a country which is five times larger than France, sheltering 25 million people. The FAZ is also characterized by a great heterogenity, drawing volunteers from more than 300 different ethnic groups. [51]

Born during the mutinous days of 1960, the Zairian army has been synonymous with extortion, marauding, murder, rape, and utter apathy towards the protection of lives and property of the people.[52]. The local populace of Shaba, as well as elsewhere in Zaire reckon the soldiers as a bunch of thieves rather than as defenders of public life.[53] Even the Moroccan chief of Army Staff, Colonel Dlimi, mentioned in a confidential note to King Hassan II that "the state of the Zairian army is very bad. No organization, no discipline, no serious officering, no motivation (except the worry to drink, to eat and to look for girls). And more serious, no proper training."[54]

Mobutu had himself enumerated the vices of the FAZ in a "note de reflexion" in 1974. He candidly

50. Young, n.14; p.171.
51. Kabwit, n.1; p.394.
52. Ibid;
53. Ibid;
said: "Thefts, embezzlements and other abuses to the detriment of the State and the people, the innumerable forgeries and the usage of falsehood, the abusive utilization of the goods of the army and the civil and military personnel, the extortion of funds, the arbitrary arrests and detentions, the illegal detentions, the barriers on the highways...." [55] He further added: "the general absenteeism, the lack of seriousness in the effort and in discipline, the non-respect of the hierarchy (everyone wants to command and obey none), the wrong utilization of the personnel, the imprecision, the inefficiency." He conceded citing the examples that "the ambulances serve to make rides to the market, the canteens are plundered... the list of the abuses is inexhaustible." [56]

Nevertheless, for some unknown reasons, the Mobutu government shirked the responsibility of regular payment to its soldiers, and this lapse on the part of the government really helps diagnose the syndrome of the many years of bullying and robbery by the army. [57]

Mobutu's troops even suffered humiliating defeat in the Angolan civil war, which greatly sapped the morale of the army, and exposed to the world that the "Zairian armed forces are still poorly organized, badly equipped, undisciplined and ineffective in battle." [58] Later in the face of the 'attack' on Kolwezi by 'Katangan exiles', "the biggest threat to every day existence in the minds of most people came not from the rebels, but from Zaire's own soldiers." [59]

56. Ibid;
Actually, a unified, professionalized, disciplined and reliable security force would perhaps better serve the state and be less of a hazard to civil society. Yet for Mobutu the army has been from the outset a political instrument: his power base in the First Republic, his vehicle for seizure of power and rule in the second. One analyst has well captured the regime's preoccupations: "It is the very importance of the military in Zairian politics that makes it so dangerous to Mobutu, and it is this threat precisely, the necessary fear of the military, which results in Mobutu's extraordinary efforts to divide, control, manipulate, politicize, and otherwise deinstitutionalize and deprofessionalize it."[60]

c. Means of Repression

Mobutu has built up a powerful machine of repression. The accompanying diagram (Diagram A) depicts the variegated rungs of the apparatus to suppress dissent and thwart any sort of design that could undermine Mobutu's grip over Zaire. In Zaire there exists a number of functionaries who can carry out arrest in their capacity of "officiers de police judiciaire" (OPJ) [61] In most cases these functionaries do not come in the judicial sector and may belong to Gendarmerie nationale, Police militaire and Securite militaire. Theoretically, the Code of Penal Procedure does enjoin that all the arrested persons must be produced before

Diagram: A

**MOUVEMENT POPULAIRE DE LA REVOLUTION (MPR)**

- **CONSEIL NATIONAL DE SECURITE**
  - **COMITE CENTRAL**
  - **SECRETARIAT EXECUTIF**
  - **COMMISSION PERMANENTE DE DISCIPLINE**
  - **JEUNESSE DE MPR (JMPR)**
  - **DEPARTEMENT DE LA JUSTICE**
  - **DEPARTEMENT DE L'ADMINISTRATION DU TERRITOIRE**

**Camp de réduction de Lokando**

**Parquet Général de la République**

**Conseil Judiciaire** (Cours suprême, Cour de la Sûreté de l'Etat, etc.)

**Administration régionale** (gouverneurs, commissaires sous-régionaux etc.)

**PRESIDENCE DE LA REPUBLIQUE**

- **CONSEILLER SPECIAL EN MATIERE DE SECURITE**
  - **Centre national de recherches et d'investigations (CNRI)*
  - **Service national d'intelligence (SNI)*
  - **Brigade spéciale présidentielle**

**DEPARTEMENT DE LA DEFENSE NATIONALE**

- **AUDITORAT GENERAL**
  - **DIRECTION DEPARTEMENTALE DE RECHERCHE ET DE SECURITE MILITIAIRE (D.D.R.S.M.)*
  - **AUDITORS MILITAIRES**

**SECURITE MILITAIRE** ("C2","S2")

- **Securité militaire**
  - **Police militaire**
  - **Brigade spéciale de recherche et de surveillance**
  - **Regions et circonscriptions militaires**

**ETAT-MJOR DE LA GENDARMERIE NATIONALE "R2"**

- **Etats-majors régionaux** (battalions territoriaux, mobiles, etc.)

**DEPARTEMENT DE L'ADMINISTRATION DU TERRITOIRE**

- **AUDITORATS MILITAIRES**
  - **Conseil de guerre**
  - **Services pénitentiaires (prisons militaires)**
the Parquet (Court) within 48 hours from the time of their arrest. However, the extra-judicial functionaries ignore such compliance and maintain that the case of a prisoner requires longer investigation and subsequently detain him for months without inculpation, invoking the doctrine of "besoin d'enquete". [62] Such persons are kept in complete secrecy and do not have the means to establish their innocence, to make appeal against their detention or even to question the legality of their detention.

According to Amnesty International, there exists a series of prudent measures for imprisonment or the restriction of individual liberty, which can be imposed by the "pouvoir executif" without any recourse to tribunals. These measures are notably the deprivation of "civil and political rights, the obligation to go away from certain places or a certain region or to live in a fixed place, the placing at the disposal of the executive council for surveillance, and the internment or the administrative detention." [63] These measures can be ordered by the Head of the State or by other political authorities, but it is generally incumbent upon the "department de l'administration du territoire" or CNRI to execute them. [64] The CNRI can apparently detain individuals for two purposes, firstly for inquiry and then for internment. Moreover, it can detain the individuals, who are required for inquiry by the external security service, le Service National d'intelligence (SNI), at its "centres de detention".

All the individuals detained by CNRI, be it for inquiry or

63. Ibid; p. 53.
64. Ibid;
for internment, are kept in secrecy. They do not have any possibility to contact their parents or friends, and most often are not even aware of the motive of their detention. They can hardly know when they would be released. According to Amnesty International, the three CNRI centres of detention at Bukavu, Kinshasa-Gouche and Lubumbashi are quite notorious for inflicting brutalities upon the detainees. It is believed that CNRI has more secret centres, well equipped with expertise in torture.

The civilians can also be arrested and detained by the members of the armed forces under various conditions. Firstly, they can be arrested by the members of the territorial battalions of the Gendarmerie nationale acting in their capacity of OPJ and can be subsequently submitted to the Parquet. Secondly, they can be charged of an offence that stems from the code of "justice militaire" and detained by the "Auditorat militaire". Thirdly, they can be arrested in a part of the country placed under "regime militaire." In all these cases, they can be as well tried by the military tribunals.[65]

The principal wings of the armed forces responsible for such detention are the Brigade special de recherches et de surveillance (BSRS) operating under the tutelage of the 'Etat-major' of the Gendarmerie nationale in Kinshasa, the branch of the Etat-major of the Gendarmerie nationale entrusted with the "securite et des renseignements" (B2), the Police militaire under the charge of the Etat-major of the Force terrestre in Kinshasa, la Securite militaire, whose head office and provincial units are nicknamed G2 and S2 respectively, and the brigade special

65. Amnesty, n.61; p.59.
presidentielle (BSP) whose headquarters is situated in the "Deuxieme cite de l'OUA" in Kinshasa.

According to Amnesty International, the conditions of detention in the Zairian prisons are extremely harsh, and they neither conform to the Zairian national legislation that governs the conditions of imprisonment, nor comply with the minimal rules of the United Nations for the treatment of detainees. The detainees in Zaire are subjected to gruesome torture and they generally "suffer from malnutrition and sometimes die of hunger. The medical services are quite insufficient. Rather, only in theory, doctors visit the prisons regularly. The lack of care and hygiene, and the improper sanitary installation and in certain prisons, the overpopulation, lead to a high level of mortality among prisoners, especially among the political detainees under preventive detention."[66]

With gory measures accompanied by wily manoeuvres, Mobutu has been able to erect a regime having mooring in the Bonapartist model. As a Bonapartist leader, he is fond of "keeping the public gaze fixed upon himself and attempts to appear as the patriarchal benefactor of all social classes", when in fact he cannot give anything to one section without depriving the other one.[67]

For all practical purposes Mobutu behaves as the country's "second Emperor, the successor to Leopold II as the owner and autocratic ruler of Zaire."[68] He heads all political institutions and a special provision of the party statutes

68. Ibid; p.608.
enjoins for his election as party chief, and consequently Head of State, for as many tenures as can be humanly possible. It has also been enjoined that insult to him would constitute a capital offence— the crime of 'lest majeste.'[69]

"Mobutu himself attempts to justify this aspect of a distinctly Bonapartist dictatorship with fascist characteristics in terms of his ideology of authenticite. In Africa, he maintains, 'le respect au chef est obligatoire et sacre'— the respect due to a chief is obligatory and sacred. He sees himself as a king whose person is sacred."[70]

Nzongola-Ntalaja further writes that he spends the public funds in the way he likes without any accountability whatsoever and "is 'The Father of the Nation', 'The Helmsman', and 'The Enlightened Guide'" which are some of the conspicuous titles that get perennial covers in the press, on radio and television, and in countless praise meetings resembling church services organized in his honour all over the country. Every important deed or trip abroad is celebrated in huge demonstrations, known as 'marches de soutien', many if not most of the unwilling participants being forced to join the processions either by the nature of their occupations or by party youth thugs."[71]

In short, Mobutu's state can be said to be an African variant of early modern European absolutism. Over time since he captured power, his regime has "evolved from a relatively typical

69. Ntalaja, n.7; pp.608-609.
70. Ibid; p.609.
71. Ibid;
military autocracy with striking caudillo and Bonapartist characteristics into an African version of an absolutist state with key elements of single party corporatism, departicipation and military despotism. The Zairian absolutist regime is an authoritarian state organized around a presidential monarch who adopted the Belgian colonial state structure and patrimonialised it by creating an administrative monarchy which was then used to recentralize power. In this state, patriarchal patrimonialism and patrimonial forms of administration, mixed with emerging bureaucratic ones, are both salient characteristics. But, like all absolutist states, Mobutu's kingdom has distinctly limited capabilities. Old forms and structures of authority continue to operate. Mobutu has increased his personal discretion beyond the confines of both traditional (pre-colonial) restraints and modern, legal ones, but has used elements of both for legitimation purposes. He has appropriated the coercive administrative, and financial means to increase his patriarchal patrimonial power. He has used police and military forces and a cadre of territorial administrators or prefects - the king's men - to control all key societal groups via the corporatist elements of the single party, the Popular Movement of the Revolution (MPR) and to emasculate the power of all traditional and quasi-traditional intermediary authorities." [72]

These coercive and administrative instruments enabled Mobutu "to whittle away traditional rules and practices," [73] and curtail the power of workers, students, churches and other

72. Callaghy, n.38; pp.64-65.
73. Ibid; p.66.
institutions. Similar to its European predecessors, Zairian absolutism came to be anchored in the remark: "It is, first of all, the expression of a will of power which is exercised in all the domains." [74]

Callaghy clarifies that "it is a will to dominate, a desire for unification, obedience, and glory; it is an impulse to overwhelm doubt." Depicting the situation in Zaire he further adds that "the authoritarian control structures of absolutism have been so grandiosely promulgated because the reality is often so shallow. Success has been both remarkable and limited. Basic order has been maintained, but with periodic and sometimes significant external assistance. This might be considered an achievement, though a brutal one, given the country's history, but the authority of the Zairian absolutist state often appears like a 'sort of authoritarian bragging which drowns in an often mocking passivity!'." [75]

2. Economic Scenario Under Mobutu

The 1965 coup d'état had heralded the eclipse of "the endemic fear, violence and insecurity of the first republic years." [76] In realm of economy, there seemed to dawn new hopes, new prospects in the country, particularly "judged against the contrasting experience of the turbulent 1960-65 period." [77]

"Inflation had been halted; there was by 1970 a stable, convertible currency, negligible debt, and ample foreign

74. Callaghy, n.38; pp.64-65.
75. Ibid; p.65.
76. Young, n.14; p.170.
77. Ibid;
reserves. Real wages went up from 1968 to 1971 for the first time since early 1961; the GNP surged well beyond the pre-independence level after years of decline; and even agricultural production seemed on the way up. A massive inflow of Western capital was at hand. [78] All these glittering things cajoled President Mobutu to boast "in expansive terms of a rendezvous with abundance" by 1980. Of course, such "vision of a manifest destiny of grandeur and prosperity" [78] in early 70s could not be superfluous.

But from 1973 onwards all these glitters began to wane. "In May-June 1974, the copper price, which had skyrocketed to record peaks in 1973-74 of over $1.40 per pound on the New York market, fell as low as $0.53, then stuck around the $0.60 mark, below production costs for a number of producers in Zaire and elsewhere. The 1973 oil price rise hit Zaire hard, as did rising grain prices. In August 1975, the Angolan Benguela railway, the cheapest export route for the Shaba treasure trove of mineral output, was severed for an indefinite period. In 1974-75 there was a $500-million turnaround in the terms of trade for Zaire which was a tremendous blow for a three-billion-dollar GNP." [80]

Apparently, it might be inferred that the conjunctural factors alone pushed the Zairian economy to such precipice. But the genesis of such plight can be attributed to the Mobutu regime which had foisted "a monstrous patronage system" upon Zaire, in which the President's entourage and subordinates are totally dependent upon his wishes for their welfare and

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78. Young, n.14.
79. Ibid;
wealth."[81] And such patrimonial system can only thrive and "operate under massive corruption exemplified and indeed, institutionalised by Mobutu himself in all walks of life in Zaire."[82]

Mobutu's connivance in the institutionalization of corruption can be gauged from the sermon that he delivered on May 20, 1976 before 70 thousand Zairians. It was an open confession of the "country's gradual, but unmistakable decline" [83] in terms of morality and economic justice. President Mobutu said: "If you want to steal, steal a little in a nice way, but if you steal too much to become rich overnight you will soon be caught. And if you have succeeded in stealing, please reinvest in our country the product of your theft. You become the Republic's enemy if you transfer this product overseas."[84]

It is held that Mobutu has "siphoned off public funds - apparently to Switzerland,"[85] and has accumulated a mammoth personal fortune and probably is on the list of the wealthiest men on the earth. However,"the size of the presidential fortune...has been a matter of controversy in and out of Zaire: a South African publication recently listed his property holdings in Switzerland, Belgium and elsewhere as $25 million, and cash holdings in Swiss banks at about $70 million."[86] His fortunes include "palatial residences not only in France, Belgium, and Switzerland, but also in all eight Zairian Provinces, including a

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81. Kabwit, n.1; p.397.
82. Ibid;
83. Ibid;
magnificent building at Nsele, 40 miles from Kinshasa, which has a swimming pool described as Africa’s largest.”[87]

Mobutu has enormous shares in the largest taxi company of Zaire, the Banque de Kinshasa, skyscrapers in the Ivory Coast, and powerful interests in the country’s wholesale and retail trade such as the luxury store ‘Zaire-Lux’. It is reported that more than 40 percent of the gross global receipts from the highly trumpeted fight of 1974 in Kinshasa between Mohammed Ali and George Foreman was devoured by Mobutu.[88] Even the former CIA chief of the US Task Force in Angola, John Stockwell, has alleged that Mobutu had pocketed $1.4 million from funds intended for Holden Roberto’s FNLA. Some diplomatic sources in Kinshasa revealed that the actual amount involved was $2.5 million.[89]

Indeed the state has become very costly. In 1975 it incurred an expenditure of 44.3 percent of GDP, and 56.3 percent in 1976. In 1977 the deficit alone amounted for 14 percent of GDP, which is highly onerous for a developing country. When Mobutu’s regime was at its peak, a reasonable proportion of government expenses was meant for public investment, but gradually the money was diverted to cope with the state payrolls. In 1971 the government expenditures were 800 million Zaires, but it had galloped to 1.87 billion Zaires in 1974.[90]

In 1975 the Shaba Regional Commissioner was pocketing $100,000 a month, of which only two percent was his salary. During this very year a prominent general reportedly had a

87. Kabwit, n.1, p.397.
88. Ibid;
89. Ibid;
90. Young, n.14; p.172.
monthly salary of 45,000 Zaires plus numerous informal payments, including 8,000 Zaires a month paid to him out of a special account in the Banque de Kinshasa.[91] A powerful member of the Political Bureau was getting a monthly salary of 17,000 Zaires for that position alone and he held several others as well. Each newly inducted member of the Political Bureau or the Executive Council would receive a 17,000 Zaire "settling-in allowance"[92] to enable him to acquire some of the "essentials" required to pursue the life style expected of a high member of the Mobutu caucus.

In 1977 the volcano eruption in Nyaranngoggo near Goma at the northern end of Lake Kivu had inflicted substantial ravage on the surrounding area. Mobutu, in a bid to evince his patriarchal concern, donated 20,000 Zaires out of his 'personal' funds to the victims of Goma, but the people never saw the funds. They simply evaporated, and Mobutu was compelled to give another 20,000 Zaires.[93] An instance of massive misappropriation by senior Zairian elites was graphically highlighted by Newsweek in June 1978. According to a study by international bankers in the United States:"Zaire sold about 70,000 tons of coffee through its government monopoly in 1976 and 1977, earning about $280 million in foreign currency." But astonishingly,"only $130 million was ever recorded in government accounts. The rest wound up in the European bank accounts of Zairian officials and their European silent partners."[94] The coffee bonanza in the wake of the

91. Callaghy, n.38, p.69.
92. Ibid;
93. Ibid;
Brazilian frost in 1975 fetched much money to Zaire, but "the
distribution of benefits from the bonanza is quite
revealing."[95]

Even certain remedial measures of Mobutu have only
boomeranged. In effect, the patrimonial nature of government and
centralization of power in one person were bound to lead to
colossal policy miscalculations and aberrations, whose fruits
Zaire has been forced to taste. The Zairianization of 1973-74
followed by 'radicalization' measures, and accompanied by the
Angolan intervention were some of the most serious steps which
Mobutu took only to precipitate the pulverization of the Zairian
economy. In the former case, a large spectrum of commercial,
plantation or industrial enterprises were confiscated from their
foreign owners and handed over to the political elites, or
managed by the state. "Those measures were a calamitous failure;
not only did they disrupt commerce and create widespread
shortages, but the unseemly spectacle of the race for the booty
by the political class cost the regime dearly in its legitimacy.
In 1976, the regime had the courage to confess the total fiasco
of this experiment, and to invite the former owners back."[96]

All these policy miscalculations proved disastrous, and
"since March 1975 Zaire has been effectively bankrupt."[97] It
reeled under a $3 billion debt it could not pay. An early Lumumba
collaborator, Kamitatu, has vividly depicted the 'infernal cycle'
of Zaire's massive indebtedness, which it cannot repay. He

95. Young, n.14; p.174.
96. Ibid;
97. Kabwit, n.1; cited from David B. Ottaway:"Zaire: Mobutu's
   Tactics Frustrate efforts to impose order in army, economy":
writes: "The economic situation of the country can be analysed in these terms: if Zaire were to stop all her foreign imports and she does not save any foreign exchanges, she must work and produce the equivalence of four years of exports merely to pay her officially known debts. Absurd hypothesis, but a real one."[98]

Even other international observers infer that under Mobutu Zaire has become "a primer for Third World horror stories in negative development,"[99] and has emerged as "the sick man of Central Africa. More than a decade of one-man autocratic rule has emptied the national treasury, left the economy debt-ridden, and created - felt resentment at all levels within the entire society."[100]

The other factor exercising debilitating influence on the Zairian economy has been Mobutu’s misplaced priorities. Uneven development has been the hallmark of the economy, and the thirst for economic surplus has fostered greater reliance upon mineral exports. This has pushed down the share of agriculture in the national economy. During 1958-1972 the share of agriculture goods dropped from 40 percent to 22 percent, but mining and metallurgy rose from 33 to 41 percent during the same duration.[101]

Rather agriculture has been wrecked in Zaire. It is eerie to note that in 1959 agriculture had a share, to the tune of 40 percent in Zaire’s total exports, mainly coffee, cotton, tea, palm oil, sisal, and groundnuts. The irony is that in 70s Zaire was even forced to import palm oil from the UK. Agriculture has

98. Kabwit, n.1; p.400.
100.Ibid; pp.400-401.
101. Ibid; p.401.
been pushed to the oblivion to the extent that it merely recives 4 percent of the national budget, in contrast with the 17 percent directly earmarked for Mobutu's 'Presidential Services'[102]. "In 1950 the country was self-sufficient in the production of corn; in 1970, however, it was necessary to import 87,500 tons, and by 1974 this had risen to 170,000 tons. Today Zaire spends about a third of her foreign currency on imports of food-stuffs."[103]

All these have filliped mass pauperization. The plight of wage earners has been miserably dismal. Table I evidences this fact:

Table I
Wage, Price, and Real Wage Indices, Kinshasa
(At official minimum wage rate)
(1960 = 100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Wage Index</th>
<th>Price Index</th>
<th>Real Wage Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 1, 1960</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1, 1964</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>575.9</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1, 1971</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>1,486.2</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 5, 1975</td>
<td>1,274</td>
<td>3,099.5</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 27, 1976</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>5,888.1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Since 1976 there has been a further decrease of approximately 40 percent because the annual inflation at the rate of 60-80 percent prevails untrammelled. A comparison "with wage movement data for the colonial period indicates real wages are below the 1910 level, and stand at the lowest point any

102. Kabwit, n.1; pp.401-402.
103. Ibid;
104. Young, n.14; p.175.
estimates have been made."[105]

The peasantry has been as well subjected to the identical pattern. Table II gives an explicit evidence of the erosion of the real value of commercialized crops. This decline in peasant well-being can only be attributed to the state action as prices are determined by the government. These figures conspicuously underscore the sordid dimensions of the agrarian crisis.

Table II

Index of Agricultural Government Fixed Prices, 1960-74

(June 1967=100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>1974</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize, Shaba/Kasai</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>114.9</td>
<td>100.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manioc, Western Zone</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>126.4</td>
<td>75.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice paddy</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>157.9</td>
<td>109.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>137.9</td>
<td>90.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton (1st)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>172.4</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm oil</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>241.4</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robusta coffee Bandundu</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>195.4</td>
<td>90.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabia coffee</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Crawford Young dwells upon the crisis as follows: "The experience of early 1960s demonstrated that a major consequence of sustained inflation is to draw goods out of the countryside, as traders can dispose of their stocks at high prices and profits in the towns. State policy tends to sustain the pattern of the buying monopolies that characterised colonial agriculture; buyers

105. Young, n.14; p.175.
106. Ibid; p.176.
often force villagers to accept well below the official prices if they are to come at all. Ubiquitous rural roadblocks erected by the army units, party youth groups, or local officials make it difficult for peasants to carry their own produce to town without losing it. The fiscal impact of the state is very heavy; while precise calculations are not possible, if we add to the legal levies of local authorities, which may amount to 15 to 20 percent cash revenues, de facto taxes implicit in export fiscal charges, artificially low prices fixed by the government, and the 'invisible' tax phenomenon, at least 50 percent of the meager revenues of the villagers are extracted from them. State agricultural services are imprisoned in the mentality of coercion inherited from the colonial period and paralysed by lack of transport. When the government provides almost no services except primary schools to the village, the cynicism and distrust with which the state is viewed should be no surprise."[107]

Besides, Mobutu has squandered money on over-ambitious projects which had nothing to do with the welfare of common masses: "Brand new Boeing 747 and DC-10 jet planes were bought; a new ultra-modern radio station, called the 'Voice of Zaire' was built with French aid and technical know-how; monuments were erected to Lumumba and to the 'Martyrs of Independence', a World Trade Centre was built in Kinshasa, as well as a Conference Hall and the OAU village; a super highway was constructed from Kinshasa to the Presidential domain of Nsele; a steel mill was

105. Young, n.14; p.175.
106. Ibid; p.176.
107. Ibid; p.175.
built at Maluku, as well as Inga Dam I and II, plus a 1,800 mile power transmission line from Lower Zaire to Shaba Province. To top it all, a great deal of money was spent on sponsoring the Ali-Foreman 'Fight of the Century' in 1974 to rehabilitate Zaire in the eyes of the world."[108]

Above all, the centralization of state power in Kinshasa resulted in a pathological concentration of economic resources in the capital which became "a gigantic suction pump drawing wealth out of the hinterland." [109] Even President Mobutu had noted this phenomenon in his 'Zairian sickness' sermon that "three-quarters of the money in circulation in the country is concentrated at Kinshasa; gas, food, pharmaceutical products imported from abroad remain at Kinshasa while the exchange required to pay for them virtually all comes from the sweat of the industrial and agricultural populations in the interior."[110] It is reported that 92 investment projects sanctioned in 1972, some 61 were centred in Kinshasa. Some 90 percent of energy consumption is in Kinshasa and the Shaba copperblt. In 1972, 303 of 334 Zairian doctors, and 40 percent of all doctors worked in Kinshasa. [111]

All these factors coalesced to constitute a crisis of truly dismal proportions. From 1975 the economy witnessed a negative growth rate (-6.1% in 1975, -4.3 percent in 1976, -1.9% in 1977). Inflation had been galloping between 75 and 100 percent, "fuelled above all by huge government deficits, which

110. Ibid;
111. Ibid;
over the last five years have exceeded by one-third."[112] A mammoth external debt piled up as a result of the extravagant borrowing for the pompous projects. The result was the three billion dollars of foreign obligations, with debt service liabilities in 1977 to the tune of 43.4 percent of export earnings, and 49.5 percent of government revenues. "Translated into human terms, the impact is mass impoverishment. Politically, the cost has been an evaporation of legitimacy at home, and of credibility abroad."[113]

**Opposition to the Mobutu regime**

Such problems plaguing the country helped the emergence of opposition groups "at one point or another to fight this state of affairs, and to destroy the reign of terror perpetrated by the oppressive apparatus of Mobutu’s regime to stifle dissent and to crush any opposition to his rule."[114] But they have been largely paper organizations of some erstwhile eminent politicians—chiefly Gizenga and Kamitatu groupings led by those who were once collaborators of Mobutu within his party-state organizations, and some radical political movements eliciting stimulus from the legacy of Patrice Lumumba. They remain disorganized, fragmented and rife with personal, ethnic and ideological dissensions, and cannot be expected to inflict any change, and "ultimate change is more likely to come from within."[115]

112. Young,n.14.
113. Ibid; p.176.
114. Ntalaja,n.7; p.610.
115. Young,n.14; p.177.
Antoine Gizenga, Lumumba's Vice Premier, had formed Fodelico, and led a succession of paper organizations. He has always resorted to the political metaphors of 1960, and continues to proclaim that he alone deserves the right to apostolic succession to Lumumba. Mobutu has scoffed at him comparing him to "a stinking corpse whom only the Russians refuse to bury."[116] Gizenga has at times received backing from Luanda and Moscow as an ideological alternative to the existing regime.[117]

Cleophas Kamitatu, the former Interior Minister in the Adoula government, had floated his Front socialiste africain (FSA) in opposition to Mobutu's dictatorship and reign of terror. However, FSA's genesis can be traced to "the first major act of terror in Mobutu's Zaire, the public hanging on 2 June 1966 of four prominent politicians, Evariste Kimba, Emmanuel Bamba, Jerome Anany, and Alexandre Makamba. They were arrested three days earlier in the house of a high-ranking military officer in what is officially known as the 'Pentecostal Plot', a trap set by Mobutu himself, who had ordered the officer in question to entice the men into a discussion of the likelihood and eventual make-up of a new civilian government to replace himself."[118] Kamitatu was also implicated in the plot, and given a five-year prison sentence. After his release he moved to France where he founded the FSA in collaboration with some radical student leaders working in Europe. In fact, it was a sort of study group whose manifesto, Manifesto du front socialiste africain, "contains no profound analysis of the problems being faced by the Zairian

116. Young, n.14; p.178.
117. Ibid;
118. NtalaJa, n.7; p.610.
people today and accordingly, no clear-cut platform on how to solve them. It is simply a collection of platitudes."

The other well known groups are the Mouvement d’action pour la resurrection du Congo (MARC) and the Convention des democrates socialistes du Congo-Kinshasa (Codeso). The MARC was founded in Brussels in 1974 by two erstwhile leaders of the Belgian section of the youth branch of Mobutu’s party, Kanyonga Mobatli and Kalonga Mwa Kalonga. Till 1976 it was known as "Le Mouvement du 4 juin". The choice of this date for the name of the movement is enlightening. It was this very date when the second major act of terror in Mobutu’s Zaire was perpetrated in 1969: the massacre of the unarmed student demonstrators in Kinshasa. Now MARC is led by former Provincial and Regional Commissioner, Monguya. "Personal attacks on Mobutu and the members of his family, rather than deeper analysis of the structures within which they operate, and moralistic sermons rather than a materialistic diagnosis of the society’s ills and a revolutionary prescription for curing them, characterise a political discourse which derives more from nineteenth century European liberalism than contemporary social theories, including the African Socialism espoused by MARC."

Kalonga broke away in 1977 and set up his own Codeso in August in the same year. Codeso claims to be in favour of 'democratic socialism' within a 'pluralist society'. It also "seems caught up in the political debates of the era of 'Euro-Communism'. Rather than addressing itself to the Zairian population and its needs, this group seems to be searching for

119. Ntalaja, n.7; p.610.
120. Ibid; p.611.
European supporters for a post-Mobutu regime after a palace revolution."[121]

Only two groups PRP and FLNC are really playing the oppositional role. Parti de la Revolution Populaire (PRP), which is localised in the Fizi-Baraka area by lake Tanganyika, is the prolongation of the 1964-65 wave of rebellions. It shot into limelight in 1975 when its members kidnapped four Stanford students from a Zoological research station in Tanzania. It is ethnically confined to Bembe, although its leader, Laurent Kabila, hails from the Shaba Luba tribe.[122]

The FLNC has provided the real menace to the Mobutu regime. Mobutu’s attempt to liquidate the gendarmes as a potentially dangerous pro-Tshombe group in 1966-67 forced them to seek sanctuary in Angola where they later constituted the nucleus of Nathaniel Mbumba’s Front de liberation national congolais (FLNC) "in the hope of returning to live in peace in a homeland freed from Mobutu’s arbitrary rule and terror."[123] It poses the most potent threat because it is basically a military grouping which has assumed the name of a political party. Due to its favourable sanctuary in Angola, the FLNC has been able to acquire adequate arms to cause worries for the Mobutu regime. But "as a political alternative it is severely hampered by its regional base and its chameleon past having successively served Moise Tshombe and European capital, white mercenaries, the Portuguese and most recently the MPLA. Many secretly hoped it might be an anti-Mobutu detonator, triggering a chain reaction

121. Ntalaja, n.7; p.612.
122. Young, n.14; p.178.
123. Ntalaja; p.602.
of events that would bring to power not Nathaniel Mbumba, but some other national leader or perhaps a transitional regime, like that of 'Field Marshall' John Ohello in Zanzibar in 1964."[124] More details about the FLNC in Chapter III.

124. Young, n.14; p.178.