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THE SECOND SHABAN WAR  
THE FRENCH AND BELGIAN INTERVENTION IN ZAIRE IN 1978

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

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B. A., TEXAS A & M University, 1976  
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## ABSTRACT

THE SECOND SHABAN INVASION: The French and Belgian Intervention in Zaire in 1978, by Major Thomas P. Odom, 181 pages.

This study is a historical analysis of the 1978 Shaba Province Invasion in Zaire that culminated in three independent rescue missions to save expatriate mine workers from being killed as hostages. The study encompasses earlier crises in the country, tracing the origins and history of the Katangan Gendarmerie from its creation in 1960 to the invasion of 1978. For the first time, this study includes the entire Western response to the invasion: the initial airborne operation by the Zairian Army; the airborne assault by the French Foreign Legion's 2nd Parachute Regiment; and the air assault landing by the Belgian Paracommando Regiment. In doing so, it addresses the abortive Zairian airborne operation that set off the massacre of expatriate mine workers and forced a European reaction to the murders. Next the thesis examines the French response to the crisis through the use of primary source materials such as the operations orders, daily journals, and after action reports. The study then addresses the Belgian response to the crisis through the Belgian Army's official publications, the Belgian news media, and personal documents of the then Regimental operations officers. Overall, the thesis uses United States Department of State message traffic to document the actions taken during the invasion.

Non-combatant evacuations are a common peacetime contingency mission, often coupled to the rescue of hostages. In this study, it is apparent that the Zairian response to the invasion led to most of the deaths involved. It is equally apparent that the French and Belgian political attitudes colored their military approach to the operation. The French deployed to restore order to the province and the Belgians went to Kolwezi on a strictly humanitarian rescue. As a consequence, each developed independent plans for the mission; plans that were not coordinated until the two European forces were shooting at one another.

Despite the political differences between the French and the Belgians, certain needs were basic. Among those, the first was extensive airlift support throughout all phases of the operation. Next was the requirement for effective training to deal with a rapidly developing situation. Additional medical support that could be deployed fully by air was also needed as was long-range communications support. The list continues, and in doing so, proves that such operations are challenging and worthy of serious study.

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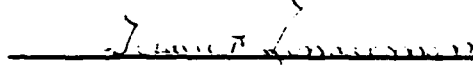
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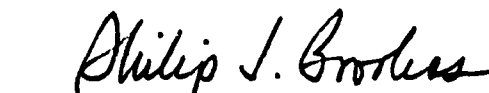
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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

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## INTRODUCTION

Another dawn breaks in the Zairian mining town of Kolwezi the 13th of May 1978. Normally on the Saturday before Pentecost, the three thousand foreign residents would be anticipating a relaxing weekend at home or, perhaps, with friends and family at the nearby lake. Most would have slept late and enjoyed the day off. In any case, no one would have expected to do anything in a hurry. After all, one who works in Africa soon comes to embrace its pace of life.

But the 13th was not to be just another day for Kolwezi. The town had been through a restless evening; an atmosphere of tension quite different from pictured above seemed to hang over the city. Dogs barked all night long and the expatriates found themselves waking repeatedly to glance at bedside clocks in anticipation of morning.

By 0500 the sun was already climbing. Some of the foreigners were awake and preparing breakfast. Some looking out their doors found the streets unusually empty for a market day when everyone tries to be the first customer and get the best price. The streets were not empty for long, however. Shortly after dawn firing broke out in different parts of the city. That in itself was not too disturbing. The Zairian Army was famous for its habit of firing off ammunition for all sorts of reasons. But when the firing grew in intensity and Zairian soldiers began running through the streets pursued by soldiers in different uniforms, it was clear that this would not be just another weekend in Kolwezi.



Death had descended on Kolwezi and many of its residents, native and foreign, had less than a week left to live. Soon the city would become a charnel house with several hundred dead scattered through its streets. Four different armies would clash in Kolwezi during the coming days. Once again, people would shake their heads and mutter, "C'est l'Afrique!"

Since the end of the Second World War, the use of the threat of terrorism-- particularly that of hostage taking-- has grown increasingly serious. Governments have struggled to find the best means of dealing with such episodes and the burden has often fallen on military forces. When one mentions hostage rescues, people are usually reminded of the daring Entebbe rescue by the Israelis or the less fortunate Desert One attempt by the United States. Few know of the Dragon Operations in 1964 by the Belgian Paracommando Regiment and the United States Air Force, the first hostage rescues since World War II. The Dragon missions were the longest range and the most successful operations, saving over two thousand hostages from execution by the Simba rebels in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Of those few who recall the Dragon Operations of 1964, even fewer realize that 1978 saw a repeat performance by the Belgian Paracommandos along with France's *2ème Régiment Étranger de Parachutistes*. In May 1978, the French, Belgians, and the Zairian armed forces were forced to rescue expatriates in the mining center of Kolwezi, Zaire. The operations that ensued could by no means be called combined operations as political differences prohibited cooperation among the forces involved. Instead each country conducted independent operations, providing a truly unique opportunity to study each military's approach to the crisis in Zaire.

## CHAPTER 1

### ORIGINS

Even to the casual observer, Africa in 1978 was ablaze in war. The continent was the scene of conflict from one end to another. Wars raged in Namibia, Angola, Chad, Rhodesia, and the Spanish Sahara. The Ogaden on the horn of Africa, and Mozambique struggled to recover from the destruction of war. Tanzania and Uganda prepared to engage in open conflict. Yet this level of war was hardly unprecedented: Africa had always been a violent and mysterious place. Zaire, the setting for Conrad's HEART OF DARKNESS, was no stranger to the ravages of war<sup>1</sup>.

The former Belgian Congo, Zaire, joined the ranks of independent countries as the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 30 June 1960. A Belgian colony for almost 90 years, the Congo was ill-prepared by its colonial masters for the independence its leaders had demanded. Within days of independence, the country plunged into a maelstrom of war that continued, almost without pause, for the next five years. From 1960 to 1963, the United Nations struggled to maintain the territorial integrity of the Congo against Belgian-sponsored attempts to wrest the mineral-rich province of Katanga from the control of Leopoldville. With Belgian officers under Colonel Frederic J.L.A. Vandewalle helping to create and lead a mercenary-reinforced Katangan Gendarmerie, Moise Tshombe, the provincial leader, fought the Congo's central government and the United Nations to a standstill.

Only with American pressure on Belgium to reduce its support did the United Nations succeed in forcing the collapse of Moise Tshombe's Katangan state.<sup>2</sup>

With Tshombe's defeat in 1963, the Katangan Gendarmerie crossed the border into Portuguese Angola and what seemed permanent exile. Maintaining its military organization and some of its mercenary leaders, it nevertheless waited for an opportunity to return home. Like the majority of the population of Katanga province, the Katangan Gendarmerie was primarily Lunda in tribal origin and easily fit into the areas of Angola that were also Lunda. The opportunity to return to the Congo, however, came quickly; in early 1964 a new wave of rebellion swept across the Congo and this time Moise Tshombe, the former provincial dissident, was called upon to rescue the struggling central government.<sup>3</sup>

Continued tribal dissatisfaction with the government in Leopoldville had led to an outbreak of rebellion in the closing months of 1963. Heavy-handed repression by the *Armée Nationale Congolaise* (ANC), the fledgling national army, coupled with the United Nations' withdrawal of its peacekeeping forces in early 1964 had produced a new outbreak of terror in the Congo. Unable to contain the spreading troubles, the Congolese President, Joseph Kasavubu, asked Moise Tshombe to return from his European exile to assume the office of Prime Minister. Agreeing, Tshombe came back in mid-1964 to a rapidly deteriorating situation. In August, 1964, the rebels or Simbas had taken most of the eastern Congo including the regional capital of Stanleyville.

The seizure of Stanleyville doomed the rebellion because it prodded the United States and Belgium into supporting Tshombe's efforts against the

Simbas. Once the rebels seized Stanleyville and its sixteen hundred foreigners, western intervention was inevitable. Building slowly, it began with the recall of the Katangan Gendarmerie and the recruitment of mercenaries to lead them. Much like the original formation of the Katangan Gendarmerie in the fight for secession, the operation owed much to the organizational skills of Colonel Vandewalle, who along with a levy of Belgian advisors was once again in the Congo at the side of Moise Tshombe. After a period of organization and training, Vandewalle unleashed his forces against the Simbas and, with the support of CIA aircraft and Cuban-exile pilots, he soon was ready to take Stanleyville.<sup>4</sup>

Vandewalle's success in retaking rebel-held territory forced the United States and Belgium to intervene militarily against the Simbas. Most of the sixteen hundred expatriates in Stanleyville were Belgian, but five were American diplomats whom the rebels began to threaten as Vandewalle's campaign gained ground. As his drive on Stanleyville gathered momentum, the rebels seized the Belgians as hostages. Unable to halt Vandewalle short of withdrawing all support from Tshombe, the United States and Belgium came to an agonizing decision to use direct military force to rescue the non-Congolese in Stanleyville and perhaps, other areas as well.

Staging from Europe, the Belgian Paracommando Regiment and the United States Air Force conducted DRAGON ROUGE to rescue the hostages. Using five USAF C130s to drop 340 paras on the airport, the operation succeeded in rescuing most of the non-Congolese on 24 November. Following the Vandewalle column's arrival in the city that same day, the Paracommandos hastily planned and executed a second operation, DRAGON NOIR, at Paulis on 26 November. Fearing an international uproar and

deepening involvement in the situation, the combined force withdrew within days, leaving hundreds of other non-Congolese behind rebel lines. Many of these unfortunates suffered at the hands of the Simbas, hideous deaths long remembered in Brussels.<sup>5</sup>

Although the DRAGON operations broke the back of the Simba movement, the war continued little abated into the next year. The Katangans remained in the thick of it alongside the mercenaries. Frustrated with the struggle, Leopoldville declared the rebellion over in March 1965. Notwithstanding this declaration, the rebels continued fighting in scattered areas over the next decade. Nevertheless, Tshombe and his Katangan army had succeeded, with heavy foreign assistance, in saving the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Success, however, does not always bring reward in Congolese politics. With the war over, squabbling between Tshombe and his erstwhile sponsor grew. Kasavubu, jealous of Tshombe's success and suspicious of his intentions, dismissed him from the government in October 1965 but that action only intensified the struggle as Congolese leaders split into pro and anti-Tshombe camps. Disgusted with the infighting and not a little opportunistic, the Commander in Chief of the ANC, Lieutenant General Joseph Mobutu, seized power and declared himself President.<sup>6</sup>

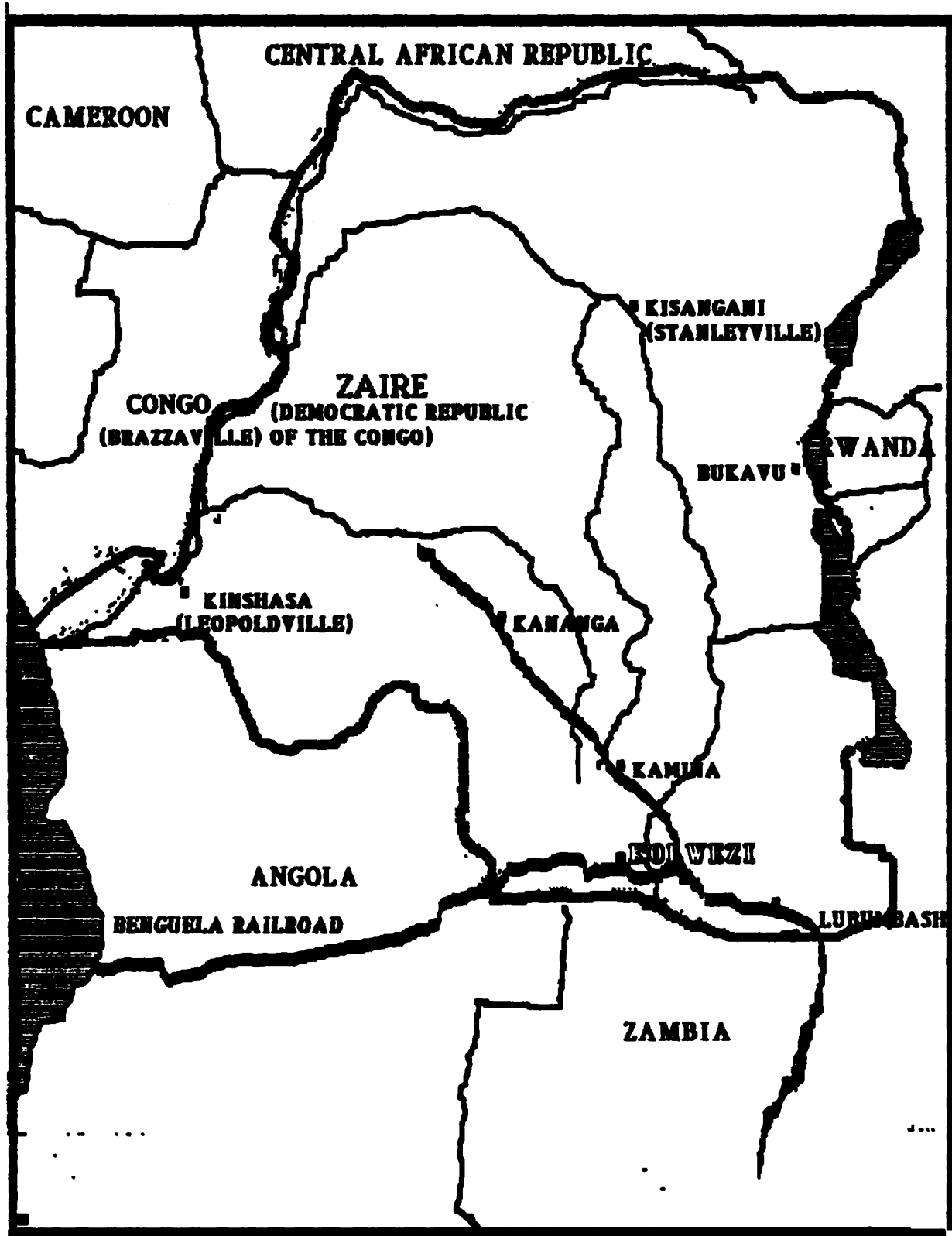
General Mobutu had been a fixture in Congolese politics since the early days of independence. Befriended by the country's stormy and short-lived first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba, Mobutu became the first Chief of Staff of the ANC. From that point forward, Mobutu served as a power broker behind the throne. Based on his control of the military, which despite its bad performance in the field, was still important in Leopoldville, Mobutu held

enormous influence in the government. He had proved his willingness to wield that power in September 1960 by temporarily seizing power to halt a struggle between Kasavubu and Lumumba.<sup>7</sup>

During the next five years, Mobutu struggled to build the ANC into something of a fighting force. Born out of the ashes of the *Force Publique*, the ANC was a uniformed military force. Soon after the revolt of the Force Publique, the Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, had promoted all the men and officers several ranks in order to ensure their support. Renaming the colonial army the *Armée Nationale Congolaise*, Lumumba soon had to rely on it to put down the Katangan Secession. Here the ANC proved incapable. Tshombe's Katangan Gendarmerie humiliated the ANC and in so doing hardly endeared itself to General Mobutu. That resentment grew when Tshombe brought his Katangans back in 1964 to save the ANC and the Congo.<sup>8</sup>

Mobutu's 1965 coup was daring, for it challenged Tshombe when he was strongest. Tshombe had almost eighteen thousand gendarmes and several hundred mercenaries available to support him against Mobutu and the ANC. But Mobutu's forces were concentrated in the Leopoldville area, and he was able quickly to consolidate his power. Tshombe publicly supported the new President and then wisely departed for Europe whence he soon began scheming to resume power.<sup>9</sup>

For the Katangan Gendarmerie, Mobutu's coup and Tshombe's extended vacation in Europe did not bode well. Though the war against the Simbas was officially over, the ANC and the gendarmes were still fighting



against rebels who failed to heed Leopoldville's decrees. The alliance between the ANC and the Katangans remained uneasy. Tension gradually increased, exacerbated by tribal hatreds and linguistic differences.

The situation exploded in Stanleyville in 1966 with the revolt of the Katangan Gendarmerie's Baka Regiment. Led by Colonel Ferdinand Tshipola, the Regiment was one of the original units that had returned from Angola in 1964. Seizing the airport, the mutineers resisted government offers to negotiate a settlement for two months. Finally, Robert Denard and an all-white mercenary unit put down the rebellion - for a substantial cash bonus. Mobutu accused Tshombe of using the revolt as a way to generate support for his return to power. Others believed that Tshombe was not connected to this attempt. Rather the 1966 mutiny was a Katangan reaction to rumors that the unit might be disbanded.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, the Mercenary Revolt of 1967 was directly tied to a plot to return Tshombe to power. Unfortunately for the mutineers and even more so for Tshombe, the wily Katangan's luck had finally deserted him. By the time of the revolt on 5 July 1967, Tshombe was languishing in an Algerian prison, the victim of a hijacking operation apparently sponsored by Mobutu. Two years later the Algerians announced Tshombe's death of a heart attack, a report questioned by many. Nevertheless, after the mercenaries learned that they were to be disbanded by the ANC, Jean Schramme, the infamous Belgian planter turned mercenary, came forward to lead the revolt.<sup>11</sup>

On 5 July, Schramme, eleven whites, and some one hundred Katangans began the mutiny in Stanleyville by firing on an ANC camp full of troops and their families. The slaughter was terrible and the ANC reacted by killing thirty other mercenaries who were not involved. The rest of the



mercenaries immediately joined Schramme. After a weeks of fighting, Schramme withdrew from Stanleyville with a force of around 150 mercenaries and one thousand black troops, not all of whom had been trained. The rebel force conducted a fighting retreat to Bukavu. Arriving there on 8 August, Schramme's force had bloodied the ANC repeatedly and had continued to grow.

Schramme held onto Bukavu for seven weeks. Repeatedly defeating ANC units thrown against him, Schramme humiliated Mobutu and destroyed the little cohesiveness that remained in the ANC. Tribal conflicts began to appear as ANC soldiers from Katanga took the blame for the defeats. T28s flying missions against the mutineers mistakenly attacked ANC forces, attacks failed due to a lack of artillery ammunition, and at least one ANC battalion revolted in sheer frustration over continuous fiascoes.

Finally, the ANC began to make progress. Fresh units, including a paratroop unit, arrived by American airlift. Rearmed, resupplied and reinforced, fifteen thousand ANC troops began to push inside Bukavu. Schramme's men had been cut off for seven weeks and casualties were growing. Denard did attempt to reach Schramme by crossing the Angolan border with a mixed force of eighty mercenaries and gendarmes on bicycles, but ANC air attacks drove them back. On 29 October, the ANC launched its final assault on the city. After seven days, Schramme's surviving men crossed the border into Rwanda.<sup>12</sup>

Not surprisingly, the ANC looked on the operation as a great victory. Mobutu had long hoped for an improvement in his army's martial standing. Suddenly, the ANC could claim that it had defeated an internal enemy without foreign assistance. The American airlift aside, the claim was true

and in light of the ANC's previous record, rather remarkable. The fact that a force of several hundred mercenaries and a thousand Katangans conducted a fighting withdrawal over several hundred miles and then stood off attacks by fifteen thousand troops for almost two months was conveniently forgotten.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast, the Katangan Gendarmerie did not forget its successes against the ANC or Mobutu's vengeance. The Katangan survivors of the Bukavu battle later were offered amnesty and repatriation to the Congo only to disappear mysteriously shortly after their return. Most observers agree that they were executed. Meanwhile, Mobutu's governor in Katanga carried out reprisals against the entire province and purged the provincial police of all the former Katangan Gendarmerie. Joined by refugees, the ex-gendarmes crossed the border into Angola. A decade later they would have opportunity for revenge.<sup>14</sup>

Following his victory at Bukavu, Mobutu concentrated on consolidating his position within the country. In keeping with its policy of maintaining access to the country's vast mineral resources, the West had consistently worked to keep the country from collapsing. The biggest backers had been and still were Belgium and the United States. Following Belgium's withdrawal of support from Tshombe's Katangan Secession, the two western allies had cooperated closely in their support of the Congo.

After the collapse of the Simba Rebellion and subsequent mercenary revolts, Belgium nearly lost its predominance in the Congo's mining industry. *Union Minière du Haut-Katanga* the Belgian mining company founded in 1906, found itself at cross purposes with Mobutu in 1966 over the control it could exert over the country without government sanction. The problem

came into focus when UMHK raised prices on its products without consulting Leopoldville. Mobutu, who had already indicated that the country was going to move toward more government controls over private industry, responded with a law requiring all companies established prior to independence to reapply for their charters. When UMHK did so, Mobutu denied the application and ordered that the company's assets be seized to form a government owned corporation, *Générale Congolaise des Minerais* (GECOMIN). Since GECOMIN could not operate without Belgian and European technicians, the Congolese signed an agreement that offered the Belgians 6 percent of gross revenues in return for operating the mines. Renamed *Générale des Carrières et des Mines* (GECAMINES) in 1971, the company ensured that a substantial expatriate population would remain concentrated in the Congo's mining region despite government efforts to replace them with trained locals.<sup>15</sup>

Belgium's relations with Mobutu remained stormy. Many problems were to be expected between a former colony and its European master, but Mobutu's attempts to break with the colonial past were at times excessive. Mobutu aspired to be known as an African nationalist; his program of "authenticity" was the first step towards that goal. He began renaming everything in the country that had a European name or a strong association with the Congo's colonial past. The Democratic Republic of the Congo became Zaire. The Congo River became the Zaire River. Town names changed: Leopoldville became Kinshasa; Stanleyville, Kisangani; and Elizabethville, Lubumbashi. Mobutu changed his own name. But when he threatened to give five years in jail to a Catholic priest who baptized a Zairian with a European name conflict erupted. As if this were not enough to challenge the

Church and strongly Catholic Belgium, Mobutu declared that Christmas would henceforth be celebrated in June. He stepped up the challenge by nationalizing the schools, but when the school system collapsed without the support of the missionaries, he asked them to return. In 1974 when Julius Chomé, a Belgian lawyer, published a book in Brussels that was critical of Mobutu, the Zairian President demanded that the Belgian government confiscate the book. When Brussels refused, "spontaneous" demonstrations occurred outside the Belgian embassy; Belgium recalled its ambassador. Relations between the two countries deteriorated further as Zairian dissidents increasingly used Brussels as a base of operations.<sup>16</sup>

Mobutu's programs ran into real problems in 1974. He moved his authenticity program into the small business sector by nationalizing all foreign-owned enterprises. After seizing hundreds of farms, trading posts, and other businesses, Mobutu turned them over, as political payoffs, to untrained Zairians who failed miserably in their attempts to run them. In this heavy-handed move, Mobutu had inadvertently collapsed Zaire's rural production and distribution system. His timing could not have been worse: 1974 saw a 50 percent decline in the price of copper, Zaire's main export. The country went from prosperity to bankruptcy almost overnight. Zaire's Western backers were left holding loans that would require drastic rescheduling if the country were not to collapse. When the International Monetary Fund agreed to manage Zaire's central bank as part of the rescheduling process, its auditors found that corruption had contributed to Zaire's economic crisis; 40 percent of the government's funds were filling private accounts. Mobutu's vision of Zairianization was turning into disaster.<sup>17</sup>

Mobutu faced other problems beyond Zaire's economic collapse. Undeterred by from the Katangan Gendarmerie still waiting across the border in Angola, Mobutu continued to create new enemies. Some opposition groups were veteran opponents; the African Socialist Forces (FSA) and the Peoples Revolutionary Party (PRP) had formed in 1964 after the fall of Stanleyville. The National Movement for the Liberation of the Congo, also Marxist-Leninist, dated back to 1965. In extending his Zairianization program to the political field, Mobutu had swept aside all political parties to establish a single party, the *Mouvement Populaire de la Revolution* (MPR). In 1974, Mobutu rammed through a new constitution that formally centralized virtually all power in his hands. His assumption of the title "Le Guide" further triggered the appearance of new opposition groups. The Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo (FODELICO) coalesced around Antoine Gizenga and other survivors of the 1964 rebellion. Members of the MPR broke away to form the Action Movement for the Resurrection of the Congo (MARC). Mobutu seemed to be in trouble.<sup>18</sup>

However, those who predicted that Mobutu would slow down on his Zairianization programs in the face of growing Western, Church, and internal opposition, were in error. At the end of 1974, Mobutu visited the Peoples Republic of China and returned sporting a new Mao jacket and the title of Citizen Mobutu. Proclaiming his intent to "radicalize the Zairian revolution", he expanded the nationalization programs to include many of the Zairianized businesses he had just given away. Other well considered measures included a 50 percent cut on all rents, and caps on salaries. It was too much and in June members of the military, now called the *Forces Armées Zairoise* (FAZ), attempted a coup. The bid failed and after a brief trial, some eleven officers

and thirty civilians were convicted and jailed. Mobutu publicly accused the United States of sponsoring the attempt.<sup>19</sup>

Mobutu's challenge to the United States represented the low point of his relationship with Washington. Like Belgium, the United States had been growing steadily more concerned with Mobutu's Zairianization. His nationalization policies and his break in relations with Israel in 1973 added to the tension. Following Mobutu's criticism in January 1975 of America's failure to act against Apartheid - despite his own contacts with South Africa - estrangement between the two countries seemed a distinct possibility. With Mobutu's accusations in June, the United States withdrew its ambassador.<sup>20</sup>

It seemed then that in mid-1975 Mobutu's future as Zaire's leader was propelling him along a path leading away from his traditional Western base of support. Zaire seemed doomed to economic ruin and Citizen Mobutu appeared determined to alienate all who might be willing to rescue the country from itself. Mobutu, however, was already involved in events in Angola that would assure him of continued Western support at the cost of three wars.

The Portuguese African empire was nearing its end in 1974. For years the Portuguese had been fighting Angolan nationalists seeking to gain control of their own country. By 1974 three different groups had emerged in the struggle: the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) led by Holden Roberto; the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) of Jonas Savimbi; and, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) under Agostino Neto.<sup>21</sup>

A coup by the Portuguese Army in April indicated that an end to the anti-colonial struggle was near but it left still at issue who would control

Angola. The FNLA, UNITA and MPLA were deeply suspicious of each other. Roberto's FNLA espoused a nationalist line and drew its greatest support from the north of the country among the Kongo. UNITA likewise was a nationalist organization and was tribally affiliated, in this case with the Ovimbundu in the south. The MPLA tended heavily toward Marxist-Leninist dogma and was heavily dependent upon Soviet and Cuban support. Most of the MPLA were of the intelligentsia, mulattoes, and others around Luanda. None of these groups was inclined to cooperate with the others.<sup>22</sup>

Mobutu had long supported the Angolan guerrillas. He favored Roberto and had provided arms and training for the FNLA. In fact Roberto was his relative by marriage. Mobutu wanted to insure that a friendly Angola emerged on Zaire's southern border and went so far as to attempt to negotiate a coalition government of transition incorporating the FNLA, UNITA, and a breakaway faction of the MPLA. When the Portuguese backers for the plan fell victim to a second coup, Mobutu tried a more direct approach.<sup>23</sup>

Mobutu decided on direct military intervention against the MPLA. A number of factors favored him. In sheer numbers, the FNLA was the strongest of the groups, with over ten thousand men in training camps and two thousand inside Angola. Mobutu had convinced both the United States and the PRC to support the FNLA and both countries were busy supplying weapons and money. He also looked to a UNITA-FNLA accommodation based on their common hatred of the MPLA. Furthermore, the South Africans could be counted on to support UNITA from the south as they too were afraid of a communist regime in Angola. Finally, Mobutu assumed that the FAZ with its steady build up in men and modern weapons would do well.<sup>24</sup>

Between July and August 1975 a total of five FAZ battalions crossed the borders into Angola and Cabinda. By October, FNLA and FAZ units were only twenty miles from Luanda. Meanwhile a South African, FNLA and UNITA column pushed up from the south. Everything was going well until November when suddenly the resistance outside Luanda hardened. Mobutu's old foes, the Katangan Gendarmerie, had taken a hand in the war.<sup>25</sup>

Following the defeat of the 1967 Mercenary Revolt and Mobutu's reprisals against the people of Katanga, most of the Katangan Gendarmerie had once again gone south into exile. The Portuguese had used them to fight the spreading rebellion, creating counter-insurgency units under the command of ex-Katangan police General Nathaniel Mbumba. Called the "Black Arrows," the ex-gendarmes were useful in offsetting Mobutu's support of the FNLA. The ex-gendarmes assumed the title of the Front for the National Liberation of the Congo (FNLC) in June 1968. When the end of Portuguese rule appeared near, the FNLC allied itself with the MPLA rather than trust a Mobutu offer of amnesty. An alliance of survival for the FNLC, it proved critical in saving the MPLA.<sup>26</sup>

Now just when Mobutu seemed about to take the winner's pot in his Angolan gamble, the FNLC seized the opportunity for revenge. Reequipped and trained by the Cubans, the ex-gendarmes slowed the FAZ/FNLA offensive and allowed the Cubans to bring in troops, armor, and aircraft. The near FAZ/FNLA victory turned into disaster. The invaders fell apart and raced back across the border, pausing only long enough to loot the city of Carmona. On 28 February 1976, Mobutu and Neto signed the Brazzaville



Accords to end the conflict and to end support for dissident groups operating inside each others border's. It was a futile instrument.<sup>27</sup>

The Angolan adventure was a total disaster for Mobutu. He had lost his great gamble. The MPLA was safely installed in Luanda, surrounded by Cuban troops. Mobutu was a dirty word in the world of African nationalism. The CIA's involvement, once public, insured that the next American president would be less willing to respond to Mobutu's hysterics over communist advances as it generated a storm of controversy in the American Congress. The FAZ had once again demonstrated its impotence. Most important, Neto owed the FNLC a favor for its support in the war, a favor that might include support for an FNLC attempt to retake its old territory, now called Shaba. The ex-gendarmes would not wait long to demand their payment.

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<sup>1</sup>Basil Davidson, The Story of Africa (London: Mitchell Beasley Publishers and Mitchell Beasley Television, 1984), 278; Tony Avirgan and Martha Honey, WAR IN UGANDA (Westport, Connecticut: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1982); Joseph Conrad, Heart of Darkness and The Secret Sharer (New York: New American Library, 1983).

<sup>2</sup>The number of volumes concerning this period in Zaire's history is enormous. As a sample see: Madeleine G. Kalb, The Congo Cables: The Cold War In Africa-From Eisenhower to Kennedy (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982); Ernest W LeFever and Wynfred Joshua, United Nations Peacekeeping in the Congo, 1960-1964: An Analysis of Political, Executive, and Military Control, 4 Vol.s (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1966; Edward Hymof, Stig Von Bayer: International Troubleshooter For Peace (New York: James H. Heineman, 1965); A.G. Mazerik, ed., Congo and the United Nations, 3 Vol.s (New York: United Nations Review Service, 1960); Conor Cruise O'Brien, To Katanga and Back: A UN Case History (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962); Frederic J.L.A. Vandewalle, Colonel e.r. Belgian Army, L'Ommengang: Odysee et Reconquete de Stanleyville, 1964 (Brussels, Belgium: Le Livre Africain, Collection Temoinage Africain, 1970); M. Crawford Young Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965); M. Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Stephen R. Weissman, American Foreign Policy in the Congo (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1974).

<sup>3</sup>Young and Turner, 255; Peter Mangold, "Shaba I and Shaba II", SURVIVAL, VOL. XXI, No. 3, May-June 1979, 109.

<sup>4</sup>See Vandewalle; Fred E. Wagoner, DRAGON ROUGE: The Rescue Of Hostages In the Congo (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1980); David Reed, 111 Days in Stanleyville (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Mike Hoare, Congo Mercenary (London: Robert Hale & Co., 1967); Lois Carlson, Monganga Pau (New York: Harper & Row, 1966); Jo Wasson Hoyt, For the Love of Mike (New York: Random House, 1966); Howard M. Epstein, ed., Revolt in the Congo (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1965); William Attwood, The Reds and the Blacks (New York: Harper & Row, 1967); Gerry S. Thomas, Mercenary Troops in Modern Africa (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984); Homer E. Dowdy, Out of the Jaws of the Lion (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Thomas P. Odom, LEAVENWORTH PAPER NUMBER 14: Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo, 1964-1965 (Fort Leavenworth, KS.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1988).

<sup>5</sup>See Wagoner; Reed; Vandewalle; Hoare; Dowdy; and Odom.

<sup>6</sup>Young and Turner, 50-54.

<sup>7</sup>Kalb, 89-101.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 4-7, 23-24, 173-177

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<sup>9</sup>Young and Turner, 52, 57-58.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 250-251; Irving Kaplan, ed., Zaire: a country study (Washington, D.C.: American University, 1979) 259-260.

<sup>11</sup>Young and Turner, 57-58, 419, 251. These authors report that Tshombe's kidnapping was beyond the capability of the Congolese security services as it required a support network that spanned from Africa to Europe. Though accusations have ranged from the CIA to the KGB, the perpetrators remain unknown. The same cloud of mystery hangs over the report of Tshombe's "heart attack"; that seems fitting considering Tshombe's probable involvement in the equally mysterious death of Patrice Lumumba. Schramme had been involved in the Katanga Secession and formed his own unit, the Bataillon Leopard. Following Tshombe's surrender, Schramme crossed into Angola with seven mercenaries and five hundred Katangans. He and his unit returned at Tshombe's call in 1964 and fought in the war against the Simbas. Schramme later published Le Bataillon Leopard as account of his exploits. The book is interesting reading but of doubtful value as history.

<sup>12</sup>Young and Turner, 251-253.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 255.

<sup>15</sup>Kaplan, 218-220.

<sup>16</sup>Kalb, 379-380; Kaplan, 100-101.

<sup>17</sup>Kalb, 379-381.

<sup>18</sup>F.S.B. Kazadi, "Mobutu, MPR, and the Politics of Survival", AFRICA REPORT, January-February 1978, 11; Kaplan, 62-65.

<sup>19</sup>Kaplan, 65-66, 99-101, 260-261; Kalb, 381-382; Young and Turner, 173.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Young and Turner, 253-254, 376-378, 448, 464.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 448.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 376-378. Young and Turner point out that Mobutu was gambling on a broad scale. He was anti-MPLA because of its communist backing, not only from the Soviets and the Cubans but the Brazzaville government as well. An MPLA victory in Angola would put communist countries on Zaire's north and south. Mobutu had territorial ambitions on the Cabinda enclave and had been supporting the rebel Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave also. Finally, if he could pull off the gamble, he would have established himself as the African leader of the day.

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24Ibid.

25Ibid., 254.

26Ibid.

27Ibid.; Colin Legum, ed., "Zaire", AFRICA CONTEMPORARY RECORD: Annual Survey and Documents 1976-1977 (ACR76-77), Vol. 9 (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1977), B534-B535. For a first hand account of the CIA operation to funnel money and supplies to support this war see: John Stockwell, In Search of Enemies (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978). For a first hand account of two mercenaries involved with the operation see: Chris Dempster and Dave Tomkins, FIREPOWER (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980).

## CHAPTER 2

### SHABA I

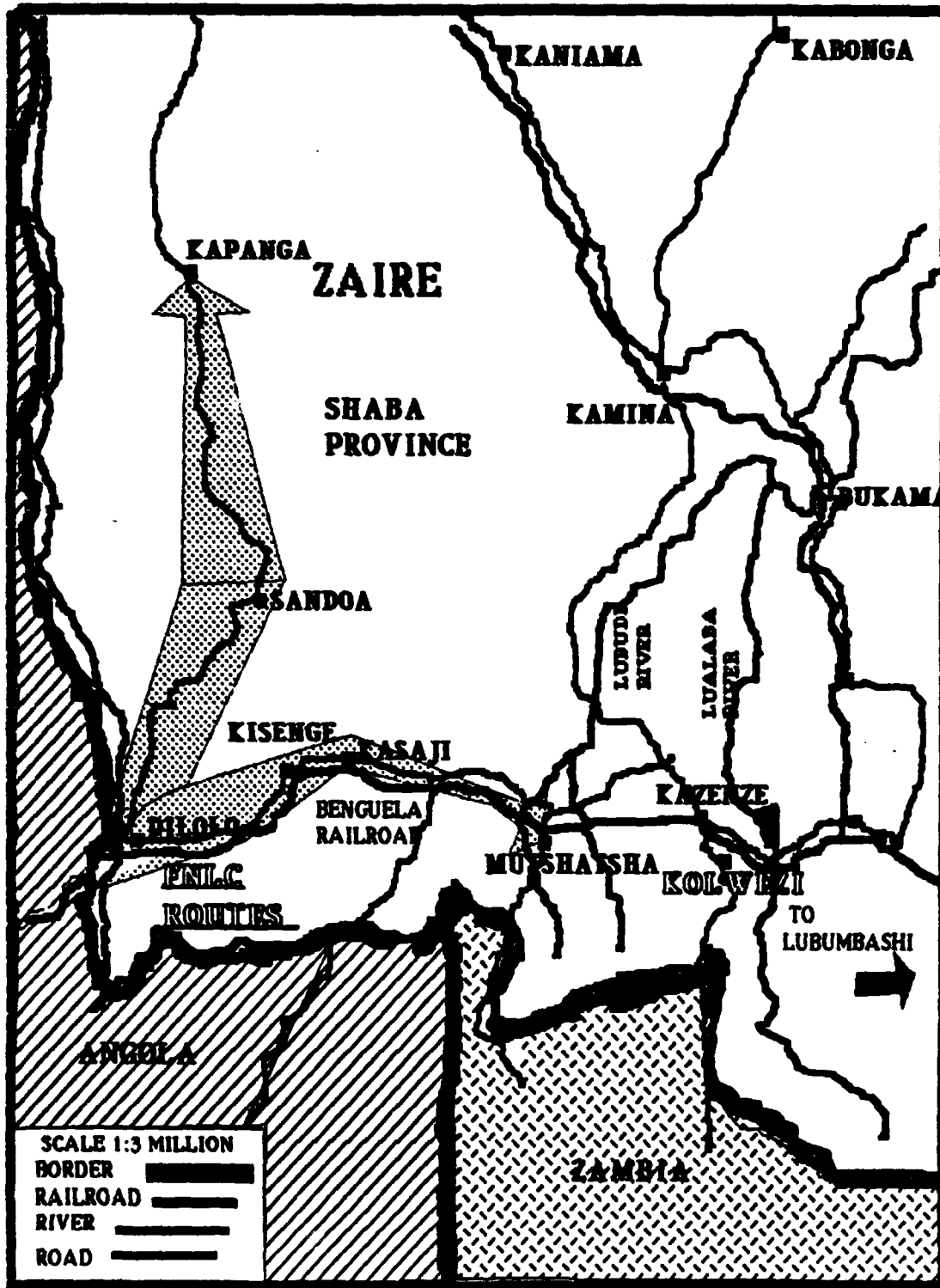
On 8 March 1977, the FNLC under the command of General Nathanael Mbumba, invaded Zaire's Shaba province from Angola. Approximately two thousand men mounted on bicycles crossed the Zairian border. Their drive met virtually no resistance as they proceeded along the railroad that crosses the border at Dilolo and divided into columns headed for different objectives throughout the province. At 1330, one FNLC company occupied the manganese mining town of Kisenge, killing the FAZ squad leader charged with its defense. The remainder of the squad escaped to Malonga to report the invasion. The Eighty Day War of Mobutu had begun.<sup>28</sup>

The FNLC rapidly seized their initial objectives. Reports came in that Kapanga was in rebel hands by 1430 on the 8th. On 9 March, Dilolo fell to their control, followed by Kasaji and Mutshatsha on the 10th. By 15 March, the rebels held Sandoa. The Zairian response to the invasion was sluggish and uncoordinated. Reports had arrived from the province in 1976, indicating that the FNLC were actively recruiting young men of military age among the Lunda. As March 1977 approached, additional reports claimed that the FNLC did plan to invade. Such reports were ignored and in some cases, actively discouraged. A division of troops protected the area, but as a tension reducing measure, Mobutu had ordered that the the border remain free of large units. When the FNLC moved those units near the invasion area failed

to act decisively. Though Mobutu dispatched Colonel Mampa Ngakwe Salamayi, the army Chief of Staff, to take command of the operations center in Kolwezi on 9 March, the FAZ reaction to the invasion remained dismal. On the 10th, two companies of the 2nd Airborne Battalion moving from Kasaji to Divuma ran into an ambush near Malonga. Suffering only one killed, the ninety-three man force, fleeing, abandoned all crew-served weapons, including heavy machine guns, a 75mm cannon, and mortars.<sup>29</sup>

To reinforce the region, FAZ headquarters in Kinshasa had ordered the 11th Brigade of the newly formed Kaymanyola Division flown to Shaba. Intended to be an elite unit, the Kaymanyola Division was a new concept for the FAZ. Activated under North Korean instructors, the unit was a melting pot of all tribes and walks of life in Zairian society, an attempt to reduce tribal influence and hatreds within the FAZ. Unfortunately for the Kaymanyola, the division was only six months old when it was ordered into battle. Two of the 11th Brigade battalions arrived in Kolwezi on the 12th and were immediately committed with the remainder of the 2nd Airborne Battalion. Under the command of a Lieutenant Colonel Monkoti, the composite unit fell apart as soon as it made contact with the FNLC, requiring two days to reorganize. Finally on the 18th, Monkoti led the force in a march on Kasaji. Once again, the FNLC ambushed the unit, but this time it held together, sustaining two dead, two missing, and three wounded while killing fifteen of the FNLC. Meanwhile, the remaining units of the division were still in Kinshasa awaiting transportation to the war zone.<sup>30</sup>

Things stayed confused at the regional headquarters, and Mobutu began to involve himself directly. FAZ regional headquarters had ordered the 3rd Company of the 4th Battalion, a Kinshasa based unit on temporary



duty in Kolwezi, to reinforce Sandoa. Arriving in the town, the unit commander, Lieutenant Munganga, took his unit back to Kolwezi, leaving the town to be occupied by the FNLC the next day. Such withdrawals and the initial defeats suffered by the 2nd Airborne and the Kaymanyola Division angered Mobutu and he relieved Colonel Salamayi six days after the unfortunate colonel had taken command. On the 23rd, Mobutu relieved Salamayi's replacement, along with all of the staff in Kolwezi.<sup>31</sup>

The situation remained grim for the FAZ. Monkoti's force was *hors de combat* by the 23rd due to morale problems. A company of commandos under a Major Tshibangu arrived in Kolwezi on the 23rd. Sent to Mutshatsha on the 24th along with Monkoti's unit, the two units fought isolated engagements the next day. On the 27th, a company of pygmies commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Mukobo reinforced Tshibangu at Mutshatsha. Both units conducted uncoordinated counterattacks that failed. Their only success was that they managed to link up in time to withdraw.<sup>32</sup>

Once again, the FAZ moved to stop the invasion through reorganization. FAZ headquarters in Kamina divided the operational area into three zones centering on Kamina, Kolwezi, and Luiza City. That did not placate Mobutu, who on the 29th again changed operational commanders, this time placing Brigadier General Singa Boyenge Mosambay in command. Singa did receive more reinforcements as the 12th Brigade of the Kaymanyola moved by rail from Kamina to Kolwezi at the end of the month. Another force, two battalions of the Airborne Division under a Colonel Songambe, arrived at Kamina with orders to deploy to Kanzenze, sixty kilometers from Kolwezi. Songambe put his headquarters there as directed,



but deployed his units 139 kilometers the other side of Kolwezi. As if afraid not to add to the confusion, the local air commander refused to allow his aircraft to fly resupply missions unless he personally approved each one. In summary, the first month of Shaba I was a disaster for the FAZ. On 7 April, things began to look better, for a French liaison party arrived to coordinate the deployment of Moroccan troops to Zaire. Thus, a decade after the FAZ had claimed victory over the Katangans, it once again needed foreign assistance to fight its old foes.<sup>33</sup>

For Mobutu, the attack should not have come as a surprise. In compliance with the Brazzaville Accords, Mobutu had ceased supporting the FNLA and had many of its camps withdrawn from the border. But, he had increased his support of UNITA and he continued support to FLEC incursions into Cabinda. In Brazzaville, Neto and Mobutu had agreed to normalize relations but it had proved a short-lived honeymoon. Angered by Zaire's continued support of his enemies, Neto had claimed that the FAZ was once more preparing to invade Angola. Meanwhile, the leadership of the FNLC established links with other dissident groups as it prepared for the invasion.<sup>34</sup>

Certainly, there were numerous groups willing to discuss Mobutu's ouster. By one count, some thirty-two gathered in Paris to build support for the invasion. Some of these dissident organizations agreed to provide men for the invasion. Reportedly, the People's Liberation Party from Kivu, famous for the kidnapping of Jane Goodall's three assistants in 1975, and the Democratic Force for the Liberation of the Congo, led by Antoine Gizenga of the abortive Stanleyville regime, provided troops and supplies.<sup>35</sup>

In any case, the most important support provided the FNLC was that of Neto. In return for that sponsorship, the FNLC mined and patrolled UNITA infiltration routes into Angola. While Neto reportedly was growing tired of the FNLC's free reign in eastern Angola, Mobutu's clumsy support for Angolan insurgent groups insured that the Angolan leader would provide the logistical base for the invasion. Mobutu could only blame himself.<sup>36</sup>

As the invasion proceeded apace, Mobutu demonstrated little inclination toward self-criticism. Very quickly, he seized on the ties between the FNLC and the Cubans in Angola to generate the idea that this was a communist invasion. Appeals to the Organization of African Unity on this basis made little progress, but the invasion had broken two African rules of acceptability. The FNLC had crossed international borders and more important, the FNLC, heavily Lunda based, appeared to be launching a tribal attack. Nothing makes African leaders more nervous than cross border tribal unrest. In a grand gesture of solidarity, Idi Amin flew to Zaire and offered the unspecified services of his "suicide squad"; other African nations voiced support for the oft-criticized Mobutu. Yet none seemed overly impressed by his version of a communist threat. So while the OAU spoke against the invasion, the international body failed to react to cries of Cuban activity.<sup>37</sup>

The OAU was not alone in its indifference to the Cuban threat. Mobutu next turned to the United States for assistance. Long a supporter of Mobutu, the United States had been a principal supplier of military aid, donating around \$400 million in aid since the early 1960s. The United States underwrote much of the United Nations' expense in stabilizing the Congo.

The United States funded the CIA's Congolese version of Air America, with its Cuban pilots, during the Simba Rebellion. The United States Air Force had flown the airlift operations that helped put down the 1967 Mercenary Revolt and recently, the CIA had funded the FNLA's struggle against the Cubans in Angola. Now the Cubans were back - this time they were Castro Cubans and on the wrong side of the border. Surely, Mobutu could count on the Americans to help him against a Cuban invasion.<sup>38</sup>

In 1977 Washington D.C., nothing could have been less likely. President Carter and his Administration were not known for their support of the controversial Mobutu. Instead the Administration leaned toward Nigeria, Zaire's rival, as the key player in African politics. In general, the Carter Administration at this stage regarded Africa's problems as regional and therefore subject to regional solutions. Since Detente was not yet on the shoals, Carter and his aides, save National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, were more concerned with preserving the status quo. Andrew Young, the US Ambassador to the UN, publicly dismissed the danger of an Africa gone Marxist and jibed at Mobutu's inability to handle the FNLC. Moreover, in view of its emphasis on human rights, the Carter Administration could hardly be expected to rally behind the Mobutu regime, of which the State Department had once said, "Generally, after interrogation, nonpolitical prisoners are not subject to repeated beatings."<sup>39</sup>

Suffice it to say that Mobutu received less support in Washington than he had hoped. Aside from a statement by the State Department that the situation was "dangerous," little anti-communist hysteria crept into the Administration's response. Agreeing to speed up military assistance material that Washington quickly described as non-lethal, the United States

chartered civilian DC8s to airlift the supplies. As the crisis continued, the Congress actually reduced credits for military assistance from \$30 to \$15 million. So much for American support in the Shaba I affair.<sup>40</sup>

Mobutu next approached Brussels, and as in the case of the United States, he came away disappointed. As his initial request, Mobutu asked for one thousand paras, a bid for support that drew little serious consideration from the Belgians. In consideration of the safety of their nationals in the war zone, the Belgians were unlikely to intervene to support the FAZ. With an approaching election, the time was hardly ripe for new Belgian adventures in Zaire. Besides, the Belgian business community had hardly forgiven Mobutu for his nationalization programs of 1973 and 1974. Aside from additional supplies of small arms and crew served weapons, Mobutu received little else from his ex-patrons.<sup>41</sup>

Just as things were looking bleak for outside military assistance, Mobutu received help from unexpected quarters. A traditional Muslim and rabid anti-communist, King Hassan of Morocco offered the services of a combat-experienced paratroop brigade. Matching Morocco's support, Egypt agreed to provide a group of trained pilots and mechanics to back up Mobutu's limited air force pilots. Finally, Saudi Arabia granted funds to defray the operation. Under the command of two colonels who had served in the UN Force in the Congo, the force was to be allowed to fight alongside the FAZ, if airlift could be arranged.<sup>42</sup>

In a move that rankled Belgian sensitivities, France agreed to provide the airlift needed by the Moroccans. President Giscard d'Estaing ordered the action without consulting France's National Assembly. Reportedly bowing to pressure from francophone Africa to contain Soviet-Cuban advances on the

continent, d'Estaing already knew the request was coming. Colonel Yves Gras, head of the French Military Mission (MMF) in Zaire was responsible for the foreign intervention to rescue Mobutu.<sup>43</sup>

Gras, with thirty seven years service, was a experienced soldier. After leaving Saint-Cyr in 1941, he had taken part in a revolt of the cadets after the Italian occupation of Aix-en-Provence in November 1942. Later, the determined Frenchman escaped through Spain to Morocco where he joined the French colonial forces to fight in Italy and France. After recovering from wounds received in the liberation of his homeland, Gras went overseas again, seeing active service in Madagascar, Indochina, and Algeria. By the time of his posting to Zaire in 1976, he had developed a reputation for directness that was respected if not always welcomed. Fortunately for Gras, his ambassador in Zaire was of a similar mold.<sup>44</sup>

André Ross, after thirty years in his country's diplomatic service, was a respected and experienced ambassador. He too was also known for a willingness to speak his mind. More important, Ross worked well with his military colleagues. As the initial drama of Shaba I unfolded, he dispatched Gras to the area to study the situation. When Gras reported that a battalion of French paras could regain the upper-hand, but that unaided the FAZ could not throw out the FNLC. Ross agreed, but said that the affair would be better left to an African country. Ross' political officer, Ivan Bastouil, suggested the Moroccans, a suggestion that was ultimately accepted by the governments of France, Morocco, and Zaire.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to orchestrating the Moroccan involvement, France provided direct assistance to the FAZ. France was already the Zairians' principal arms dealer, it had provided the FAZ with Mirage fighters, Panhard

armored cars, and Puma helicopters. After employing eleven military aircraft to fly in the Moroccans, France provided additional arms, ammunition, and a twenty man team from SDECE, the French external security service, to help coordinate Shaba's defensive plans.<sup>46</sup>

France's purpose in acting so decisively to aid Zaire was consonant with her activist policy towards the African continent. Even after the collapse of the struggle for Algeria, France had maintained strong commitments to support francophone countries in Africa. France had troops stationed in the Ivory Coast, Djibouti, Senegal, and Gabon. At the time of Shaba I, the French Foreign Legion was engaged in Chad. In short, France and in particular President d'Estaing, took a strong interest in what occurred in Africa. Considering the relative importance of Africa's resources to European industry, such concern was understandable.<sup>47</sup>

Zaire supplied nearly 80 percent of its exports to Europe and drew 67 percent of its imports from European markets. D'Estaing had visited Kinshasa in 1975 at a time when Mobutu's stature needed a boost. For this gesture, French business won a \$500 million contract for telecommunications equipment. The company that won the Zairian contract was Thomson CSF International under financing provided by the *Banque Francaise du Commerce Exterieur*. Both the company and the bank were headed by members of d'Estaing's family. Still, France's total investment in Zaire was only \$20 million compared to the estimated \$750 million to \$1 billion of Belgium and the \$200 million of the United States. So the intervention offered France an opportunity to pursue economic interests at the same time that it supported its self-proclaimed role as Africa's guardian. Consequently as Mobutu and the FAZ breathed a collective sigh of relief at the arrival of

the French liaison team in Kolwezi, Belgian eyebrows rose in suspicion at the rapidity and extent of the French response to the beleaguered Zairian's plea for help<sup>48</sup>

The arrival of the Moroccans on 9 April dramatically changed the course of the war. Only some sixty kilometers from Kolwezi, the FNLC's attack had permanently stalled and now the FAZ and Moroccans prepared to drive them out. The combined headquarters at Kolwezi launched a two pronged attack by two brigades moving on parallel axes toward Dilolo and Sandoa. Backed by the Moroccans, the attack kicked off on 13 April supported by air strikes, artillery, and armor. After an inauspicious beginning--the lead FAZ unit retreated almost twenty kilometers after receiving fire--the attack proceeded in fits and starts. Over the remainder of April and most of May, the FAZ with the Moroccans in trail gradually prodded the FNLC westward along the railroad and back into Angola. On 28 May, Mobutu claimed victory over the invaders. His Eighty Day War was over, but the trouble in Shaba was only beginning.<sup>49</sup>

Shaba I was hardly over before its repercussions began. The people of the province were the first to suffer a repeat of the 1967 reprisals. As soon as it had seen the last of the FNLC across the border, the FAZ turned on the local population, with the most savage reprisals falling on the heads of the Lunda. Although the FNLC had announced that it sought to overthrow Mobutu by seizing Shaba, the local population had remained aloof from the campaign. Their caution failed to protect them and within the coming months over 200,000 slipped across the border into Angola to escape FAZ vengeance.<sup>50</sup>

As for the FAZ, its ultimate success on the battlefield did not save it from Mobutu's vengeance. Numerous officers were purged and brought to trial for complicity in the invasion, cowardice, or incompetence. Among those dismissed were: Ngunza Karl I Bond, the Chief of Staff of the FAZ; his advisor Bizeni-Mana; Munguya-Mbenge, former Shaba Province Commissioner; the Chief of the Lunda; and Colonel Mampa Ngua, the Chief of Staff of the FAZ ground forces. By March 1978, the wheels of Zairian justice began to roll in the trial of ninety-one defendants, twenty-four civilians and sixty-seven military officers. Penalties were severe: nineteen death sentences of which thirteen were executed, and sentences ranging from five to twenty years.<sup>51</sup>

During this round of trials and executions, the FAZ also underwent a complete reorganization. Reduced in strength by 25 percent, the units were streamlined and reequipped by drawing on recent foreign military aid. The "elite" Kaymanyola division established its headquarters in Kolwezi, and at the recommendation of Colonel Gras, the MMF began training an entirely new airborne unit. The efforts of the MMF, its American counter-part ZAMISH, and their Belgian associates focused on producing a FAZ that could at least defend itself against the FNLC.<sup>52</sup>

Unfortunately for the FAZ, the FNLC remained a force in being. Moreover, it could legitimately regard itself as undefeated as it had withdrawn from Shaba at its own pace. With the FAZ's actions in Shaba after the war, the FNLC gained in strength. When it crossed into Zaire, it had boasted at most two thousand armed men. After the war, enrolled approximately five thousand soldiers who looked forward to another round with Mobutu. Besides the recruitment of new members, the FNLC left



behind a number of men who were able to lose themselves in the local population. Based on its growing support, the FNLC's leadership realized that in the next campaign it would be able to seize Kolwezi, a move that might topple Mobutu.<sup>53</sup>

While Mobutu had been at one of his lowest points of popularity before the war, his victory had made him a hero. When the war broke out, Mobutu's standing had plummeted in Kinshasa, but his flamboyance in assuming command and the foreign aid that had come to him reversed the trend. In cultivating both local and foreign support, he promised needed reforms in all areas of Zairian life. Following the campaign he used the purge trials of the FAZ and government as show cases to prove he was taking the actions promised. By November, Mobutu was able easily to win a vote of confidence extending his rule another seven years.<sup>54</sup>

Even as he rebuilt domestic support, Mobutu restored foreign confidence in his ability to govern Zaire. Of course, France remained firmly behind the Zairian strongman. A real surprise came with the outspoken support of the Peoples Republic of China as the Chinese took advantage of the situation to lambast the Soviets in the United Nations. The Carter Administration, after its chilly response to requests for increased military aid during the war, increased military aid to the Zairians. Even Belgium attempted to restore some warmth to its relations with Mobutu by expelling a dissident leader believed to have been involved in the invasion.<sup>55</sup>

However well things might have been going for Mobutu in Zaire and with the West, his relations with Neto of course remained hostile. Regardless of his difficulties in controlling the activities of the FNLC or his desire to rid

himself of them and over 200,000 refugees, Neto could not countenance Mobutu's continued support for UNITA. The Angolan leader soon found it easier to allow the FNLC to resume its operations against Mobutu.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Kenneth L. Adelman, "Old Foes and New Friends", AFRICA REPORT, January-February 1978, 5; Legum, ACR 76-77, B527- B528; Malutama di Malu, "The Shaba Invasions" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and Staff College, 1981), 26-30.

<sup>29</sup>Malu, 31-32.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 33; Pierre Sergent, LA LEGION SAUTE SUR KOLWEZI (Paris, France: Presses de la Cite, 1978), 34-35.

<sup>31</sup>Malu, 33-34.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 35-36.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 37-38.

<sup>34</sup>Adelman, 5-6; Gerald J. Bender, "ANGOLA, THE CUBANS, AND AMERICAN ANXIETIES", FOREIGN POLICY, No. 31, Summer 1978, 15.

<sup>35</sup>Adelman, 6.

<sup>36</sup>Colin Legum, ed., "Zaire", AFRICA CONTEMPORARY RECORD: Annual Survey and Documents, 1978-1979 (ACR78-79), Vol. 11 (New York: Africana Publishing Company, 1980), B572.

<sup>37</sup>Peter Mangold, "Shaba I and Shaba II", SURVIVAL, Vol. XXI, No. 3, May-June 1979, 109; Adelman, 6-7; Oye Ogunbadejo, "A Case Study of the Shaba Crisis, 1977", 229.

<sup>38</sup>Adelman, 7.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.; Thomas A. Marks, "THE SHABA ADVENTURE", AFRICA INSTITUTE BULLETIN, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1978.

<sup>40</sup>Adelman, 8; Kaplan, 99; Ogunbadejo, 226.

<sup>41</sup>Adelman, 8; Mangold, 109; Kaplan, 99-101.

<sup>42</sup>Adelman, 8; Ogunbadejo, 226-227.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.; Le General Yves Gras, "L'OPERATION KOLWEZI", MONDES ET CULTURES XLV, No. 4, 8 November 1985, 693.

<sup>44</sup>Sergent, 67-68.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 26-27; Gras, 693.

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<sup>46</sup>Young and Turner, 374-375; Mangold, 110; Adelman, 8-9.

<sup>47</sup>Ogunbadejo, 226-227; Mangold, 110.

<sup>48</sup>Adelman, 8-9; Young and Turner, 374-375; Mangold, 110.

<sup>49</sup>Malu, 38-54.

<sup>50</sup>Young and Turner, 257; Malu, 72: Mangold reports the number of refugees at 50,000-70,000, Mangold, 110.

<sup>51</sup>Malu, 72-73; Kaplan, 67-69.

<sup>52</sup>Kaplan, 75; Gras, 693.

<sup>53</sup>Mangold, 110-111; Adelman, 10; Legum, ACR78-79 B571-B572.

<sup>54</sup>Kazadi, 11-12; Adelman, 9.

<sup>55</sup>Adelman, 9-10; Legum, ACR78-79 B572; Kaplan, 101.

<sup>56</sup>Mangold, 108; Legum, B573; Adelman, 10.

## CHAPTER 3

### SHABA II BEGINS

Shortly after midnight 11 May 1978, three thousand to four thousand members of the FNLC slipped quietly into Zaire from Zambia. Organized into eleven "battalions," each with about three hundred men, the force divided into two groups and pushed on in the darkness. One group of around a thousand men headed toward the town of Mutshatsha in order to cut the railroad. The second had a more important target: to seize the city of Kolwezi.<sup>57</sup>

The FNLC's route was well prepared. After the reprisals taken by the FAZ against the locals for their support of the 1977 invasion, the FNLC had found it easy to infiltrate the province in strength over the previous six months. These infiltrators, along with stay-behind elements, had busily recruited among the locals, particularly among the Lunda around Kolwezi. There the FNLC had recruited some five hundred young men and organized them into a local militia. Now these locals guided the FNLC into hiding positions around their targets. Breaking open weapon caches smuggled in on charcoal trucks from Zambia, the FNLC distributed arms and ammunition to their local recruits. The final touch was to insure that each had on the FNLC's tiger armband to ease identification. Preparations completed, the rebels rested and waited through the following day, a day of unusually high absenteeism among the local GECAMINES employees.<sup>58</sup>

Operation COLOMBE was going exactly as planned. This time General Mbumba's forces were not going to squander their efforts on unimportant villages. By seizing the mining capital of Kolwezi, the FNLC would take Zaire and Mobutu by the throat. Following the fall of Kolwezi, the next targets were to be Likasi and Lubumbashi. Mbumba's goal was no less than the ouster of Mobutu, and the disruption of the mining industry was to be the key to his removal. In choosing to infiltrate through areas of Zambia populated by the Lunda, the FNLC had avoided the strength of the FAZ. With over eight thousand troops in Shaba, the FAZ felt that it could control the Angolan border. But, the FAZ had left Kolwezi and the border with Zambia virtually unguarded.<sup>59</sup>

At first light 13 May, the FNLC struck Kolwezi. Unfortunately for the city's inhabitants, the invaders were up against the Kaymanyola Division's 14th Brigade, considered by FAZ headquarters the weakest unit in the division. Ironically, with the Kaymanyola's other brigades aligned along the border with Angola, FAZ headquarters had stationed the 14th Brigade in Kolwezi along the "safe" border with Zambia. Consequently, while many FAZ soldiers fought valiantly against the FNLC's attack, the 14th Brigade rapidly fell apart. Quickly overrunning the airfield, the rebels destroyed all FAZ aircraft on the field: five to seven Italian Macchi ground attack aircraft, two to four Cessna 310s, a Buffalo transport, and two helicopters. Brigadier Tshiveka, the commander, disappeared and was not heard from until he surfaced at Tenke-Fungurume days later. By 1000 hours, the FNLC controlled the airport, the FAZ depots, and most of the town. FAZ survivors had three choices: attempt to hide; hold out until reinforcements arrived; or surrender and join the FNLC. No alternative guaranteed survival.<sup>60</sup>

For the foreigners, the 13th of May was not to be the lazy Saturday most had planned. At 0500 hours, Henry Jagodinski, a forty-six year old worker for GECAMINES, woke to the sound of barking dogs. Failing to return to sleep, Jagodinski and his Chokwe wife, Angeline, went to prepare breakfast. Soon both heard firing around the town. Jagodinski passed it off as the usual FAZ activity, an assumption soon disproved by running gun battles outside between the FAZ and unidentified troops. Though the fighting quickly passed by, Jagodinski's family were joined at breakfast by a FNLC search party. After questioning them on weapons or FAZ survivors, the FNLC ate and departed.<sup>61</sup>

Across town things were more delicate. In their home, Maurice and Maryse Faverjon, a French couple, listened to rounds slam into the walls. Maurice was surprised; a veteran of Shaba I, he had never felt any danger then and had just sent for Maryse in January. The previous evening his houseboy had warned them that a new war was soon to start. Faverjon had dismissed the warning with a laugh. He was not laughing now. On the telephone, Faverjon learned that the French military advisors and several Moroccans had been shot. Rumors abounded: an American had been shot as a mercenary; Cuban advisors were running the operation; and the FNLC were searching all the homes. Just then, Faverjon became very frightened as a FNLC soldier arrived to demand to see Faverjon's son. After identifying himself as the son of a former house servant, the rebel assured them they would not be harmed.<sup>62</sup>

Although most of the foreign population was not in immediate danger, some individuals were at risk. The rumor that the French advisors had been shot out of hand did not prove to be true, but Lieutenant Jacques Laissac,

Adjutant-Chef Pierre Nuvel, and Adjutants Jacques Bireau, Jacques Gomilla, Bernard Laurent, and Christian Cesario had disappeared under FNLC control. They never returned. The FNLC had come prepared with lists of people subject to trial by the "People's Court of Justice" and that tribunal was soon in session. Conviction by the drumhead court carried an almost guaranteed sentence of death. In the expatriate community, the French and anyone who appeared to be Moroccan were in danger of being arrested. As for the local population, those reported to be loyal to Kinshasa soon found themselves behind bars -- if they were lucky.<sup>63</sup>

Initially, the FNLC were remarkably disciplined, certainly better behaved than the FAZ. The danger from random violence came from two other sources. The first were the FAZ who continued to fight around the Regional Headquarters in the new town or scattered survivors in hiding around the city, most of whom had gone to ground in the European quarters rather than in the hostile native sections. The second were FNLC's local recruits who, like the *jeunesse* of the Simba Rebellion, harbored grudges against the affluence of their European neighbors. The presence of FAZ deserters eager to prove their enthusiasm for the new regime added to the precariousness of the situation. That instability held the potential for extreme violence, violence that Kinshasa could do little to halt.<sup>64</sup>

First word of the invasion came from a Belgian pilot attempting to land at Kolwezi airfield. His plane hit by small arms fire, the surprised Belgian flew on to Lubumbashi to relay the news. By 1000 hours in Kinshasa, the news of the attack had reached Western embassies.<sup>65</sup>

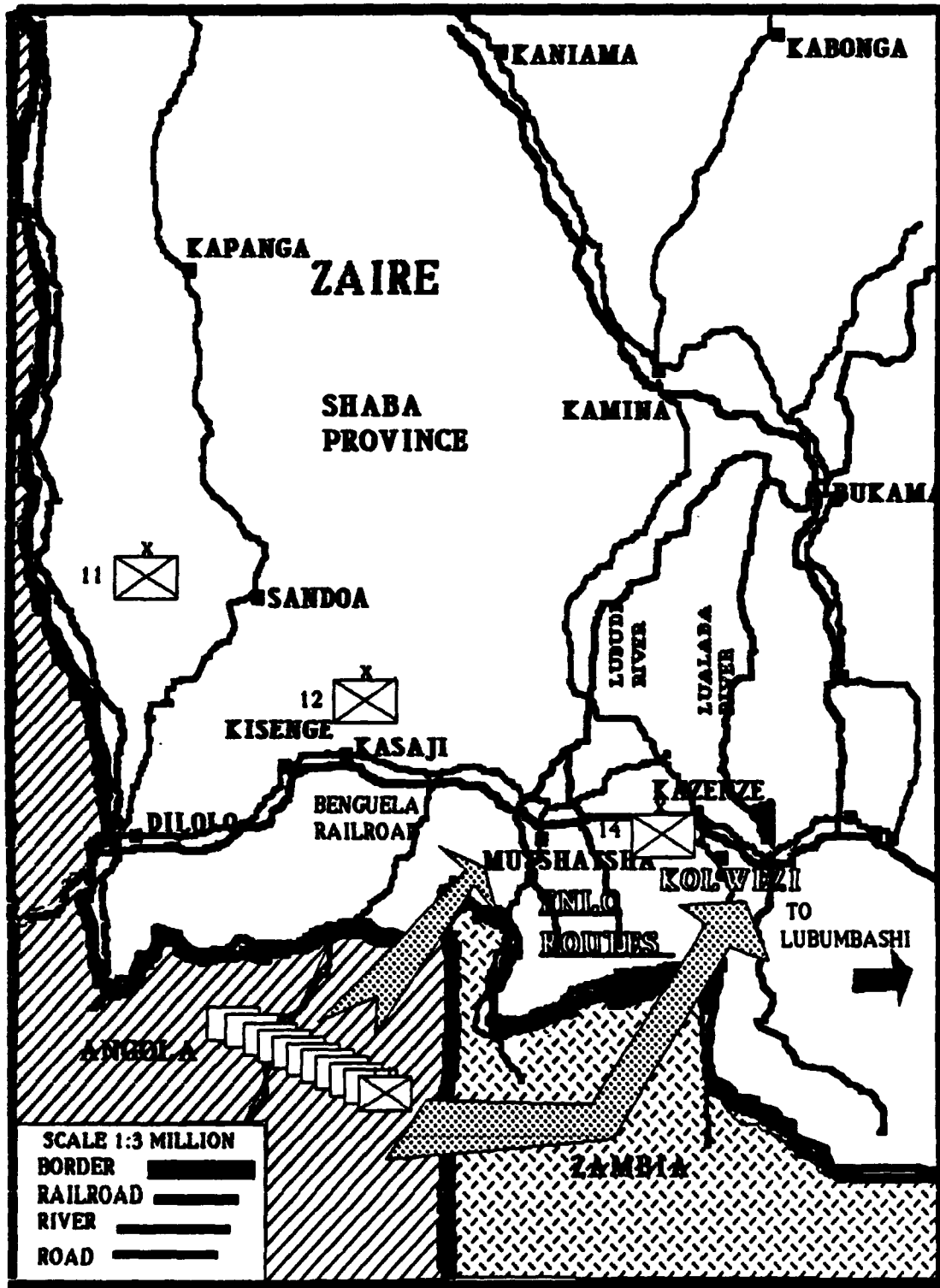
André Ross had just returned from the airport where he and most of the other ambassadors had waited all morning to depart on a Mobutu



sponsored trip to Boende. Finally, Mobutu's staff, without giving a reason, had relayed word that the trip was cancelled. At 1000, Ross learned; Colonel Larzul, the military attache, brought word that Kolwezi airfield had been attacked and most of its aircraft destroyed. Almost simultaneously, Colonel Gras, one floor above, received a telex from Lubumbashi reporting the invasion. Even as Gras read the cable, Ross called him downstairs.<sup>66</sup>

Of the three men gathered in Ross' office, none was surprised by the fact of the invasion, only by its timing. In April, Ross had submitted to Paris a report on the current state of affairs in preparation for the upcoming French-African conference. He had referred to Shaba as an occupied territory rather than an integral part of Zaire. He thought a new attack probable. In assessing the capability of the FAZ to defend the area, Ross relied on Larzul who bitingly referred to the FAZ as "*le grande corps invertebré*." Neither Larzul nor Gras believed the FAZ had recovered from its disastrous showing the previous year. What had hindered their ability to predict the present attack was an action taken by Mobutu. In his purge of FAZ headquarters, Mobutu had fired a Belgian major named Van Melle who had worked in the FAZ intelligence directorate. Van Melle had routinely passed intelligence to the Western embassies in Kinshasa, but his Zairian replacement was hardly as cooperative.<sup>67</sup>

Ross needed additional information and the three split up to gather it. Colonel Larzul went directly to FAZ headquarters where he met with General Babia, Chief of Staff. Babia confirmed the news from Kolwezi and reported that the rebels had infiltrated through Zambia. Nevertheless, Babia claimed that the FAZ 1st Military Region Headquarters and the 14th Brigade remained in contact by radio and in control of the situation. Gras meanwhile



saw his own contacts at headquarters who, with a few bribes, related the same story given to Larzul. Concurrently, Ross visited the Belgian and the American embassies to consult with his counterparts who also confirmed earlier reports.<sup>68</sup>

Comparing notes back in the French embassy, Ross, Larzul, and Gras prepared to notify Paris of the Shaban invasion. It had been Ross' nightmare of the previous year that the FNLC would take Kolwezi with its twenty-five hundred Europeans, four hundred of whom were French. Now, a little more than fourteen months later, the nightmare had come true. With the situation confused and the status of the FAZ unclear, Ross cabled Paris that an attack on Kolwezi had occurred and the expatriate population remained in the city. The message reached Paris at 131305 May 1978.<sup>69</sup>

Shortly after the first message had been dispatched, Gras received further intelligence. GECAMINES headquarters in Lubumbashi had been able to maintain telephone contact with its people in Kolwezi. These contacts reported that the FNLC, wearing the tiger emblem of the previous year and armed with AK47s, had control of the city. Happily, the reports indicated the FNLC had behaved well towards the expatriates. Other information identified an FNLC column headed toward Mutshatsha. Gras quickly grasped that this was not simply a raid, but a major operation to seize Shaba. The FNLC had already succeeded on the first day of this invasion in doing what they had failed to do throughout their 1977 invasion. Again, Ross fired off a cable to Paris and the three Frenchmen headed out to FAZ headquarters once more.<sup>70</sup>

Arriving there, Ross noticed that most of the senior diplomats in the city were also on hand. Significantly, Mobutu was present and in uniform. Never hesitant to dramatize, Mobutu announced that Kolwezi had been attacked by light units of the FNLC. This his audience already knew, but Mobutu stunned his audience when he added that the FAZ had known in advance that the FNLC planned an attack. Operation COLOMBE, Mobutu claimed, was a Cuban supported attack to seize the towns of Kolwezi, Mutshatsha, and Lubumbashi. Mobutu further announced that he had intended to disclose the plan on the 20th of May before its scheduled execution date of 1 June. Asking to be excused, Mobutu waited as the other diplomats left and pulled Ross aside to tell him that he had personally warned the Soviet ambassador that the U.S.S.R. must stop the invasion. Once again, the French ambassador returned to his office to inform Paris.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time Ross was meeting with Mobutu, the ambassador's two military advisors had been granted an interview with General Babia. Gras and Larzul wanted to know the status of the FAZ headquarters in Kolwezi. Both knew Babia had ordered the 133rd Infantry Battalion and the 311th Airborne Battalion placed on alert. The 311th had formed six months earlier under the tutelage of French advisors commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ballade. Ballade had informed Gras, his commander, as soon as the alert order came down. Was Babia planning something? Far from mounting a hasty operation, Babia seemed absolutely confident the FAZ had the Shaba crisis under control.<sup>72</sup>

Any such thought was absolute fantasy. Gras, Larzul, and Ross knew the capacity of the FAZ to fabricate victory out of defeat. The victory parades following Shaba I were prime examples. But without a Zairian call

for assistance, neither the French nor any other power could act. President Giscard d'Estaing had gone so far as to telephone Mobutu. Though thanked for his solicitude, President d'Estaing received no request for assistance. In fact, Mobutu repeated Babia's assurances that the FAZ had everything under control.<sup>73</sup>

For the Jagodinski family the events of 14 May left little doubt as to who had control of Kolwezi. After spending the night sleeping in their central hallway to avoid the stray bullets, the Jagodinskis were wakened by the pounding of a rebel soldier. Henry answered the door to find a young and thoroughly drugged soldier who demanded to see their passports. Angeline found the documents, but it was obvious the soldier could not read them. Still he appeared satisfied, until he started to leave and spotted a wounded FAZ soldier hiding in a ditch beside the house. Yelling threats in Swahili, he covered the Jagodinskis with his weapon and almost fired when one of their children ran forward to greet him. The presence of the child defused the situation and the soldier left, prodding his FAZ prisoner in front of him. Encountering an FNLC patrol just down the street, he called them over and they promptly shot the prisoner. Later, the FNLC returned and searched the area more thoroughly. Finding another FAZ soldier, they beat him senseless and put a bullet through his head. Clearly, the FAZ was not in control.<sup>74</sup>

By the end of the 14th, the expatriates in Kolwezi knew that they too were in mortal danger. That afternoon, following the murder of the second prisoner, the Jagodinskis saw their neighbor, Mr. Marreckx, led off by an FNLC patrol. His crime, one that cost his life, was the possession of a military-style riding jacket. A similar piece of clothing almost proved fatal

to Maryse Faverjon. That morning she had chosen to wear an olive drab blouse styled with epaulets. An FNLC soldier spotted her from the street and opened fire, thinking she was a mercenary. Reinforced by more soldiers, the FNLC searched the house and threatened to take away her husband since they could not find the mercenary seen earlier. In two other incidents, the FNLC arrested European men and went through mock trials followed by mock firing squads. Both were released, but they saw evidence that convinced them that most of the firing squads were real.<sup>75</sup>

Back in Kinshasa, the day had started early at the French Embassy. Ross and his military advisors met to review the situation. Ross had been in contact with the Belgian and American embassies, both of which had direct communications with GECAMINES in Lubumbashi. Summarizing their reports, Ross pointed out that so far the FNLC had shown no hostility toward Europeans and had maintained discipline. They were a uniformed, well led, and reasonably well armed force. Beyond that little bit of intelligence, nothing else had developed.<sup>76</sup>

For Gras, the situation was clearly dangerous enough to warrant action. He was convinced the attack was an invasion and he knew from the previous year that the FAZ could not handle it with its units in Shaba. Backed by Larzul, Gras convinced Ross of the threat to the expatriates in Kolwezi. Determined to force a response from Paris, Ross telephoned the *Elysée*, the residence of the French President.<sup>77</sup>

Ross spoke to a Colonel Mermet on duty at the residence. He assured Ross that President d'Estaing had read all the messages on Shaba and was personally involved. Ross then went on the offensive, warning that three thousand Europeans should be considered hostages. He further warned that

the attack on Kolwezi was only part of a larger operation to seize all of Shaba as evidenced by the news of a secondary attack on Mutshatsha. He then turned the telephone over to Gras who promptly asked that two companies of French paratroops be sent to reinforce the FAZ. Gras explained that he intended to reinforce the 311th Airborne in order to conduct an airborne assault on Kolwezi. He also requested that the French advisors under Lieutenant Colonel Ballade be allowed to serve with the unit on the proposed operation. Ending the call, Ross and Gras sat back and waited for a response.<sup>78</sup>

As one might expect when a colonel called Paris asking for troops to intervene in central Africa, a positive response was not immediate. Mr. René Journiac, President d'Estaing's advisor on African affairs, was against a unilateral intervention at this stage. President d'Estaing was in any case waiting for the Zairians to make a formal request for assistance. Further, both d'Estaing and Journiac felt it imperative that the Belgians take the initiative in this crisis. Only in an extreme situation, would Paris consider a military intervention, and that would have to be a combined Belgian-French operation.<sup>79</sup>

While the Belgian initiative never materialized, the Zairian request was only minutes from delivery. Shortly after Ross had finished speaking with Paris, the Zairian Ministry of Foreign Affairs called requesting his presence at an important meeting. Ross hurried off to the Presidential residence where Mr. Idzumbuir, the Foreign Minister, announced to an audience of ambassadors that did not include the Soviet representative that Zaire was making a formal request for "*aide de toute nature*". Appearing in fatigues to enhance the drama, Mobutu entered and repeated his minister's

request. Ross now had the request demanded by Paris, but he still needed to know how the Belgians planned to react.<sup>80</sup>

As Ross hurried back to the embassy, Gras met with General Babia. Babia no longer appeared confident that the FAZ could contain the situation in Shaba. The attack on Mutshatsha had contradicted his earlier dismissal of the invasion as a mere raid on Kolwezi. Never one to hesitate, Gras urged him to airlift the 311th Airborne and 133rd Infantry battalions to Lubumbashi using FAZ C130s and Air Zaire's DC10 and DC8. Gras also recommended that the Military Academy's cadets be converted to an infantry battalion and sent to join the 311th and 133rd. Once assembled, the units were to launch a drive to seize the Lualaba bridge, some forty kilometers from Kolwezi. Such a move would cover the approach to Likasi and facilitate a future move to regain Kolwezi. Gras was successful; by evening the 133rd was in Lubumbashi and the 311th was on standby to move. Satisfied that he had convinced Babia to take the initiative, Gras returned to brief Ross.<sup>81</sup>

At the embassy, Ross was listening to another briefing, this one from an irate Larzul. Following his return from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ross had sent Larzul to the Belgian embassy to sound out the Belgians position on military intervention. Larzul returned within the hour angry and disappointed. The Belgians felt the situation did not warrant a military response. Instead, they were in contact with the FNLC representatives in Brussels attempting to negotiate a release of the European population. Failing that, military intervention would be used only as a last resort and it would be conducted along the lines of the Stanleyville rescue. Though at this stage of the conversation, Larzul was disappointed, he had no reason to



become angry until his Belgian counterpart continued," I must assure you that a French intervention would be considered by us as inopportune and unfriendly." Gras, back at the embassy in time to hear Larzul's response, became more convinced that the French were going to have to act. Whether it would be a combined operation with the FAZ as he had proposed to Paris, he could not say. He could, however, see that if Paris waited for Brussels to respond, the response might come too late.<sup>82</sup>

By Monday 15 May, the world's attention was focused on Shaba province. In Washington, Brussels, and Paris crisis committees were engaged in studying the situation. For the United States, beyond a Zairian request that military assistance supplies be speeded up, the major concern was the eighty odd Americans located in or near Kolwezi. As the American Embassy and its consulate in Lubumbashi painstakingly went over the lists of Americans in the area, they set the number at eighty-nine. Most of the Americans were located in a construction camp eight kilometers north of the city. The company, Morris-Knudsen, had a contract to work on the Inga-Shaba power line project and was equipped with its own aircraft.. With two DC3s, one Piper Aztec, and two Bell 206 helicopters, the company was already considering an air evacuation of the seventy-four people in the camp. That still left an estimated fifteen Americans in the area. In a dramatic shift from the yawning response of the Carter Administration the year before, the request for military supplies was rapidly approved to be flown in by military airlift. Significant, too, was a query from the Shaba Task Force to American embassies in Brussels and Paris on whether the Belgians or French were going to intervene.<sup>83</sup>

In Brussels, the situation was similar. The government crisis cabinet was studying the situation. However, the number of Belgians trapped in Kolwezi put the Belgian government under intense public scrutiny that Washington was spared. By 15 May, though Mr. Simonet had already denied that the government was planning to intervene militarily, many members of the Belgian Paracommando Regiment were speculating on whether there was going to be another Stanleyville. The answer to that question, however, was going to come from Zaire.<sup>84</sup>

In Kinshasa, the French embassy continued its push for action. By now, Ross had the embassy operating on a twenty-four hour basis, monitoring the situation. GECAMINES headquarters in Lubumbashi had continued its contacts with its personnel inside the rebel held city. Suddenly, an air of desperation began to cloud reports as the news from Kolwezi grew worse. By 1000 hours, Ross and Gras knew that as of the 14th, the rebels had killed ten Europeans, nine Belgians and one Italian. The gloom was partially dispersed when Ross received a copy of a message from the Belgian community in Kolwezi to its embassy demanding a Belgian airborne operation. Ross hoped this plea would force the Belgians to react.<sup>85</sup>

Gras had been invited to a cocktail party at the Moroccan Ambassador's home to celebrate their Armed Forces Day. He was not planning on attending until Ross told him to go in order to corner the representative of the Belgian embassy. With the directness of the French colonel, the order was like setting a bulldog on a kitten: the unfortunate target was Mr. Van Sina, the Belgian Chargé. Gras cornered his victim shortly after Van Sina's arrival, and after the briefest exchange of pleasantries, Gras opened with, "You must know that if you do not decide to

intervene, you will be held responsible for the massacres that are going to occur in the coming hours!" When Van Sina replied to the effect that such a decision was not his to make, Gras told him it was his duty to do the impossible and get his government to act rather than dismiss the reports of massacres as exaggerations. Gras concluded his sermon with the admonishment to the astonished Belgian that, "You do not have the right to ignore what is happening!"<sup>86</sup>

As he returned to the embassy, Gras believed that his "conversation" should at least have prodded the dispatch of a cable to Brussels demanding an intervention by at least three battalions of Belgian paras. Considering his own situation, Gras came to the conclusion that if Paris did decide to act, then the operation was going to take place with little time for planning. To facilitate the operation, Gras decided to create his own little battle staff. Using Larzul to gather as much intelligence as possible, Gras selected Lieutenant Colonel Philippe Vagner and Commandant Capelli to begin planning for either a combined operation with the Belgians or a French unilateral operation. Vagner was to contact Major Van Melle to begin the planning for the combined option. At this stage, Gras considered the planning to be a back up measure to the scheme he had put before General Babia to use two French companies to reinforce the 311th and 133rd in a drive from the Lualaba bridge. He knew that the two units were already in Lubumbashi and he assumed they were following his plan. It was the only bad assumption Yves Gras made during the crisis. In doing so, he had failed to consider that Citizen Mobutu might take a hand in the situation.<sup>87</sup>

That evening, unbeknownst to Gras, Major Mahele, the commander of the 311th, received the surprising directive to report to the President's

office. An excellent officer in an army with a disastrous record the thirty year old Zairian enjoyed the respect of his French advisors. Honored, Mahele must have been taken aback when Mobutu ordered him to select a single company to be dropped on Kolwezi the following morning. The remainder of the unit was to push overland from Lubumbashi to link up with the air-dropped unit. President Mobutu, as many political leaders have done before, was unable to resist direct involvement in military planning. Colonel Gras' proposed plan served as a basis for the directive, only Mobutu wanted the 311th to carry it out without French troops. A FAZ victory at Kolwezi would restore public confidence in his regime.<sup>88</sup>

The order was absolute madness, but Mahele had little choice but to comply. His unit was only six months old. Only one company, the 1st, had qualified for its wings with a total of six jumps. The 2nd had made but four jumps and the 3rd was still in ground school. None of the units had ever made a tactical jump and assembly as part of an operation. Now, Mahele had to select one for an almost guaranteed slaughter. Keeping the 1st Company intact as his most experienced unit and therefore his best bet on reaching Kolwezi the most quickly, Mahele selected the 2nd Company to make the jump. Commanded by Captain Mosala-Monja, a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the 2nd Company, 311th Airborne Battalion had less than twenty-four hours left in its short life as an effective unit.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>57</sup>Accounts on the number of FNLC involved in the invasion range from a high of five thousand to a more conservative two thousand. The same holds true on their route; it is not clear if all the force came through Zambia or only the group headed toward Kolwezi. While of interest, the critical issue was that the Kolwezi assault group did use Zambia and remained undetected. See: Malu, 55; "Massacre in Zaire", U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, June 5, 1978, 41; Kyenga Sana, "Kolwezi Liberated", BRUSSELS SPECIAL, 29 May 1978, 10-12( translated in JPRS); Rudolf Schmidt, "Zaire after the 1978 Shaba Crisis", AUSSEN POLITIK, English edition, 1st Quarter 1979, Vol. 30, 88; Legum, 574; Message, AMEMBASSY LUSAKA TO SECSTATE WASDC, 01738, DTG. 151203Z MAY 78, SHABA INCURSIONS: USE OF ZAMBIAN TERRITORY.

<sup>58</sup>Legum, ACR 77-78, B574; Paul Emmanuel, "Disorganization, Corruption In Kolwezi", BRUSSELS SPECIAL, 21 June 1978(translated in JPRS); Sargent, 17-18.

<sup>59</sup>Erulin, Le Colonel Erulin, "Kolwezi", unpublished script to a presentation at the US Army War College, no date; Raymond Carroll, James Pringle, and James O. Goldsborough, "MASSACRE IN ZAIRE", NEWSWEEK, May 29, 1978, 39; Schmidt, 92; Mangoid, 111; Sargent, 36-37.

<sup>60</sup>Legum, ACR 77-78, B574; Sargent, 36-37; Message, SECSTATE WASDC TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA, 123864, 160120Z MAY 78, SITUATION IN SHABA AS OF 1500(EDT) MAY 15, 1978; Schmidt, 88; Emmanuel, "Disorganization".

<sup>61</sup>Sargent, 19-22.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 22-23, 229; Le Colonel Gras, Chef de la MISSION MILITAIRE FRANCAISE AU ZAIRE, "JOURNAL DE MARCHÉ DU 13 MAI AU 15 JUIN 1978" (hereafter cited as MMF).

<sup>64</sup>Legum, ACR 77-78, B574-B575; Sargent, 53; "Massacre", U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, (cont. from p.33) 5 June; Erulin, "Kolwezi".

<sup>65</sup>Carroll, et al, "Massacre", 35; Sargent, 28-29.

<sup>66</sup> I have chosen to relate the narrative from the French perspective for two reasons: first there are more sources available on the French; and two, the French are the dominate actors in this episode. Sargent, 28-29; MMF; Gras, 693.

<sup>67</sup>Sargent, 33-35, 29.

<sup>68</sup>MMF; Sargent, 30. Sargent reports that it was Gras who saw Babia rather than Larzul. I relied upon the MMF journal as the official record. A minor point, but Sargent does go to great lengths to emphasize Gras' role.

<sup>69</sup>Sargent, 30-31.

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid.,32, 35-36; MMF.

<sup>71</sup>Sergent,31-33; Legum, ACR77-78, B575; Carroll, et al, "Massacre", 35; Emmanuel, "Disorganization", 58. Emmanuel reported that the failure to warn authorities in Kolwezi was due to pure bureaucratic incompetence.

<sup>72</sup>Sergent, 36-37; MMF; Gras, 693. Again, Sergent reports that Gras went to see Babia when the MMF journal indicates Larzul was also present.

<sup>73</sup>Sergent,37. In examining State Department records on Shaba II, I could not find a single message tagged for the crisis before 15 May. As for the American news media, the crisis did not make the newspapers before the 15th either. In the case of the Belgians, the situation was headline news on the 14th. Unfortunately, I did not have access to the Belgian message traffic. However, it appears that both the United States and Belgium waited until the 15th to form crisis teams. While I have no information on whether or not Belgian Prime Minister Tindemans or Foreign Minister Simonet telephoned Mobutu on the 13th, I feel secure in saying that President Carter or even Secretary Vance probably did not. President d'Estaing's call to Mobutu is just another example of his focus on Africa. Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA, 122789, DTG. 150239Z MAY 78, SHABA INCURSIONS : INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE; Major General Henri J.G. Depoorter, Belgian Army, "KOLWEZI", MILITARY REVIEW, September 1979, 32.

<sup>74</sup>Sergent,49-51.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.,49-58.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.,43-44.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.,44-45.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.,45-46; Gras,694; MMF.

<sup>79</sup>Sergent, 46; Gras, 694; MMF.

<sup>80</sup>Sergent, 46-47.

<sup>81</sup>Gras, 693-694; MMF.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.; Sergent, 47-48. It is impossible to establish the exact sequence of meetings on the 14th, and I have used my own judgement in depicting them. While I am not absolutely sure they occurred in the order shown, I am convinced that they did occur.

<sup>83</sup>Message, SECSTATE WASDC, 122789; Depoorter,32; Legum, ACR77-78, B577; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04793, DTG. 151507Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: EXPEDITED FMS DELIVERIES; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO

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SECSTATE WASDC, 04785, DTG. 151343Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: W/W AMCITS AT KOLWEZI; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04808, 151946Z MAY 78, W/W US CITIZENS IN ZAIRE; President Jimmy Carter, Presidential Determination No. 78-11, MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE, SUBJECT: Assistance to Zaire, May 18, 1978.

<sup>84</sup>"Mobutu demande l'aide étrangère pour faire face à l'invasion du Shaba" LE SOIR, 14 May 1978, 1.3; "KOLWEZI 78" FORUM DE LA FORCE TERRESTRE: SPECIAL SHABA, No. 3 et 4, Sept.-Oct. 78, 6.

<sup>85</sup>Sergent, 63-64; MMF; Gras, 694-695.

<sup>86</sup>Gras, 695; Sergent, 64-65; MMF.

<sup>87</sup>Gras, 695; MMF; Sergent, 69-72.

<sup>88</sup>Sergent, 80-81. A darker interpretation of Mobutu's decision to use the 311th was that he intended to force the West to intervene in order to save their citizens. As a military man, Mobutu must have known the risks involved. Such an interpretation assumes that he saw the dangers and deliberately chose to sacrifice the 311th as a means of stimulating a western response.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER 4

### MASSACRE IN KOLWEZI

At 0630 on the 16th of May, a single C130 flying from Lubumbashi opened its jump doors and dropped sixty Zairian paratroops just east of Kolwezi. On the ground, rebel gunners opened fire on the descending troops before they hit the ground. The aircraft had been off its intended track and many of the troops landed in the surrounding bush. In many respects, they were the fortunate ones; those who landed in close to the FAZ headquarters were shot to pieces before they could assemble. Only a few made it to the headquarters, the headquarters they were supposed to have saved. At 0900, the same C130 returned and repeated its earlier performance. The results were equally disastrous. Again the rebels were able to scatter the inexperienced troopers before they could react. Of the 120 members of Captain Mosala's 2nd Company, most were missing, wounded, or dead. In any case, the unit was out of action.<sup>90</sup>

The destruction of the 2nd Company, in itself a tragic waste, sparked a greater tragedy in Kolwezi. Colonel Bosangé and around twenty survivors of the 14th Brigade had been holding out against repeated attacks since the invasion began on the 13th. During the morning, the rebels had attacked once already and failed. But the disaster of the 2nd Company broke the stretched nerves of the Zairians. As the next attack began, the Zairian soldiers broke and ran.<sup>91</sup>



As the government troops ran, they left behind around forty Europeans who had taken shelter in the offices of Baron-Leveque across the street from FAZ headquarters. That morning a Zairian officer had warned them to stay inside until soldiers came to escort them to some helicopters coming from Kinshasa to evacuate them. After the Zairians ran away, the Europeans were surprised to see the Katangans coming up the street. When two Belgian men went outside to talk, the rebels opened fire killing them. The rebels then turned their weapons on the other Europeans who were crowded into a single room. Two of the expatriates, Gino Jurman and René Michel, managed to escape by using a trap door in the toilet to get up in the ceiling crawl space where they remained for the next four days. Inside the slaughter house one other survivor struggled to live. Miss Radu, though bleeding from four wounds, survived, hidden by the thirty-nine bodies of men, women, and children. The massacres began in earnest.<sup>92</sup>

Maurice Faverjon was in trouble again. This time the Katangans came to his house and accused him of being a Mirage pilot. Hustling him into the back seat of a Volkswagen, they took Faverjon to headquarters. Just outside, the driver ran afoul of an officer who had around fifty prisoners kneeling on the sidewalk. Faverjon was convinced he was about to join those on their knees. However, the officer waved him away as distraction to his berating the soldier. Faverjon hurried home. He later found out just how lucky he had been when the fifty prisoners were discovered dead in the nearby lake.<sup>93</sup>

While his 2nd Company committed suicide, Major Mahele began his overland push to Kolwezi from Lubumbashi. A distance of 150 kilometers via secondary roads, Mahele expected the rebels to defend the route at

critical points. He was certain to encounter resistance at the Lualaba bridge and his strength did not allow for many losses along the way. When Colonel Gras had first proposed an overland drive to the Lualaba bridge, he had based his plan on the idea of a brigade size force consisting of the 311th, 133rd, and the Military Academy's cadets as a third battalion. Yves Gras hoped to corset that force with two French paratroop companies. Major Mahele had far less strength than a brigade. Thanks to the 2nd Company's independent operation, he did not have a full battalion. Before he could get underway, FAZ headquarters in Lubumbashi took his 3rd Company as a reserve. Instead of a brigade or even a battalion, the 311th began its overland march with two hundred of its normal five hundred man complement. Mahele had his command section and the 1st Company to begin his drive. By that evening, he was poised on the Lualaba for the final twenty-five kilometer push to Kolwezi.<sup>94</sup>

Back in Kinshasa, Yves Gras had continued working for some sort of intervention. Colonel Gras had been on the telephone to Paris repeatedly during the morning. Speaking to Colonel Gerin-Roze and General Vanbremeersch of the Military Cabinet at the Elysée and General Loisillon and Colonel Chabert at Army headquarters, Gras begged for a French paratroop battalion to use in an airborne operation. He also asked for permission to send the French advisors to the 311th to Lubumbashi in order to prepare for the drive to take the Lualaba bridge. But Paris had yet to give up on the Belgians taking the lead on an operation in Zaire even though Mr. Simonet continued to discount the possibility of any intervention.<sup>95</sup>

As d'Estaing's representative in Zaire, André Ross was growing increasingly desperate. The information trickling out of Kolwezi via

Lubumbashi steadily worsened as the number of reported deaths grew larger. Out of frustration, Ross grabbed Gras and the two went to the Mobutu. The audience with the Zairian went strangely. When confronted with the rising death toll, Mobutu dismissed the reports as unconfirmed and proclaimed that the FAZ had the situation "well in hand". Mobutu seemed to have made a drastic recovery from the man who asked for help of all kinds the previous day. Ross and Gras did not know of the 311th's operation and Mobutu was waiting for a positive report before telling the world of the FAZ's masterstroke.<sup>96</sup>

Returning to his office, the French ambassador again picked up his pen to try to convince Paris to act. This time the addressee was President Giscard d'Estaing. Carefully, Ross detailed his concerns: the rebels had three thousand Europeans as hostages, and they had begun killing them already. Reports had indicated the rebels might attempt to move the hostages to a central location, a move that would make a mass execution possible. The Belgian negotiations were no more than stall tactics and in any case, had nothing to do with the rebels' actions in Kolwezi. Ross concluded with the dire prediction that unless an airborne operation took place in the next forty-eight hours a tragedy was going to occur.<sup>97</sup>

Now that Ross had formally joined the advocates for military action, he wanted the intervention to be a combined effort. Ross' ideal operation was a combined French and Belgian airborne operation supported by American airlift. He had the opportunity to explore these countries' assessment of the situation when a Frenchman from Lubumbashi gave him first hand information on the deteriorating situation in Kolwezi. Ross sent the man over to the American and Belgian embassies. The Americans

believed the reports and perhaps might provide some form of support for a rescue. But the Belgians dismissed the deaths as exaggeration; Brussels was not ready to face the true nature of the situation. Ross' hopes for a combined rescue looked dim.<sup>98</sup>

Colonel Gras had already arrived at that conclusion. By now the Frenchman was like a man possessed. He had been operating on minimal sleep since the crisis began and could feel its effects. Unable to remain inactive, he went to see General Babia to discuss the use of the 311th and 133rd battalions in Lubumbashi. Anticipating a brigade-size drive on Kolwezi, Gras was completely stunned by the revelation that the 2nd Company had jumped that morning and the 311th was moving to link up with it at Kolwezi. Though Babia appeared confident, Gras smelled disaster. News of the operation soon spread around the world.<sup>99</sup>

In Washington D.C., the Shaba Task Force had been disappointed to learn Morris-Knudsen had postponed the evacuation operation of its Kolwezi base camp. Although the American embassy had ordered its consulate in Lubumbashi to evacuate quietly all Americans from the danger areas, only Morris-Knudsen had the assets to evacuate the people at the camp, a measure the local authorities did nothing to support. The FAZ had been rather coy about the idea to begin with as they hardly wanted to encourage a mass exodus of expatriates from Shaba. Nevertheless Morris-Knudsen's manager, Mr. Adams, had been ready to order the operation despite veiled warnings from General Babia that such an operation was at the company's responsibility. But as news came in on the FAZ airborne operation- the Americans at the work camp reported seeing the parachutes- Adams decided to delay the evacuation. Despite assurances from Mobutu that the

"Katangans were dispersing in all directions", concern over the expatriates' safety grew as reports of new killings continued to come in via Lubumbashi. Based on the increased threat to the Americans, President Jimmy Carter ordered the 82nd Airborne to assume a higher state of readiness. By the following day, the 82nd's 2nd Brigade was ready to go. The Carter Administration made sure that the word was out.<sup>100</sup>

The men of the 82nd Airborne were not the only military unit on alert. Across the Atlantic, the Belgian Paracommando Regiment was also on standby. The elite unit of the Belgian Army, the Paracommandos had a short, but proud history. Formed from the Belgian Squadron of the British Special Air Services and the 10th Inter-Allied Commando following World War II, the Paracommando Regiment had seen service in the Belgian Congo, and the post-independence Democratic Republic of the Congo. Units of the Regiment had intervened in the 1960 upheavals in then Leopoldville, and many of the men in the unit had jumped in Operation Dragon Rouge.<sup>101</sup>

Since Dragon Rouge, the Regiment had changed somewhat. Rather than just the three battalions of 1964, the unit had added an air-transportable tracked reconnaissance squadron, a 105mm artillery battery, an antitank company, and a mobilization cell for a fourth battalion. Based on the experience of Stanleyville, the Regiment also included a fully air-transportable surgical hospital. Retaining the headquarters for the 1st Para, 2nd Commando (Cdo), and 3rd Para battalions, the Regiment had nine independent companies. Based on the Belgian draft system, the Regiment rotated its men through in fifteen month cycles. In May 1978, the 3rd Battalion was in its thirteenth month of training, 1st Para at six months, and 2nd Cdo at three months. Training was the same for all the men. With

volunteers manning all the specialized units and noncommissioned officer (NCO) positions, a full 70 percent of the Regiment's twenty-five hundred men were professional soldiers.<sup>102</sup>

Equally important to the Regiment's reorganization since 1964, the Belgian Air Force had substantially increased its airlift capability. In 1964, the Paracommando Regiment had required United States Air Force C130s to fly it to the Congo since the Belgian Air Force at that time possessed a limited number of C47s and C54s. Now in 1978, the Belgians' 15th Wing under the command of Colonel Alain Blume had ten C130s and two Boeing 727s along with the maintenance packages necessary for advanced base operations.<sup>103</sup>

Three of the 15th Wing's C130 crews were preparing for possible deployment to Zaire by the evening of the 16th. Following the establishment of a crisis cabinet on the 15th, the Belgian government had struggled with the Zaire issue for the next twenty-four hours. Though the Zairian Foreign Minister was in Brussels asking for military hardware, the Belgian government had delayed any response saying any aid would be constrained by the two thousand Belgians in the hands of the FNLC. Accordingly, Foreign Minister Simonet had directed a full cabinet review on the 16th but when the news of the 311th's operation reached Brussels, the review shifted focus to the issue of intervention. Though the Belgians had no intention of a unilateral intervention, the Minister of Defense Paul Vanden Boeynants had ordered the General Staff to prepare for a discrete evacuation via Kigali, Rwanda. Pulling Operation plan Samaritan, a plan completed the previous year during Shaba I, off the shelf, the General Staff ordered the Paracommando Regiment to prepare one company for deployment to Zaire. At 1130 on the 16th, Colonel Depoorter ordered his 3rd Para Battalion to

have one company ready by 170300. Concurrently, orders went to the 15th Wing to ready three C130s to support the plan.<sup>104</sup>

The day was not over yet for Colonel Rik Depoorter, the commander of the Paracommando Regiment, or Colonel Blume. At 1330, the Belgian Consul in Lubumbashi had signaled, "Radical change in the attitude of the FNLC toward the Europeans. First victims signaled: first three, then five, the panic is spreading among the expatriates in Kolwezi." The message generated extreme concern in the Belgian government and at 2300 Depoorter and Blume entered a special meeting at General Staff headquarters. Depoorter and Blume were to have one thousand Paras ready by 181000 May for deployment to Zaire.<sup>105</sup>

So ended the 16th of May 1978. In Kolwezi, the rebels, sparked by the abortive Zairian airborne operation, had turned on their European hostages and the slaughter was growing by the hour. Outside the city, the 311th was approaching the Lualaba bridge in a futile attempt to save the already destroyed 2nd Company. Back in the Zairian capital city, Mobutu bragged on the success of a disastrous military operation while the Western community realized that intervention was unavoidable. As the French embassy attempted to convey the need for action to Paris, the Belgian Consul in Lubumbashi had convinced Brussels that a military response was going to be needed. The Belgian Paracommando Regiment was busily preparing for yet another trip to Africa. At the same time, the American government waited to see whether the majority of the U.S. citizens would be evacuated without employing the 82nd Airborne.

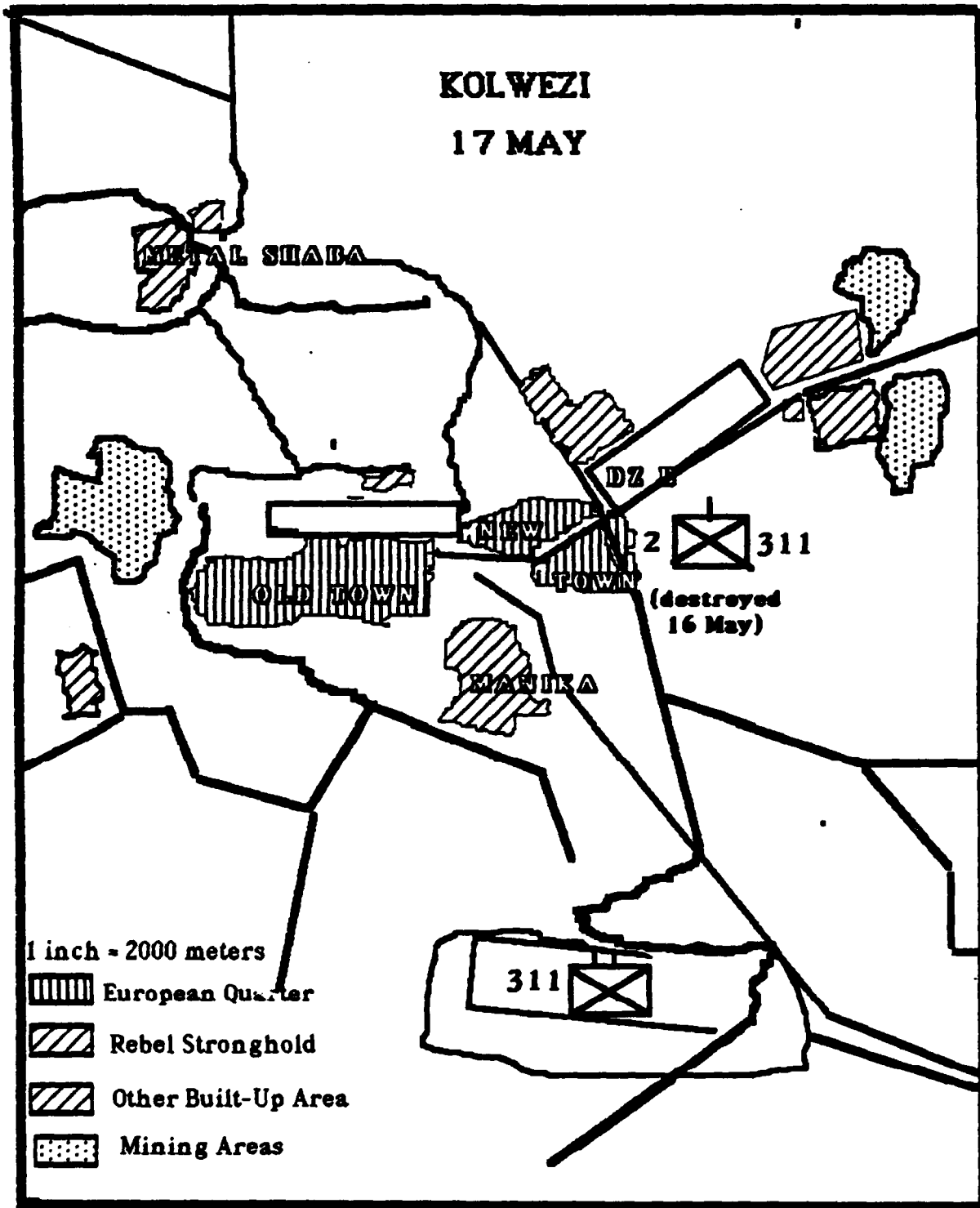
As dawn broke on 17 May, Major Mahele and his understrength 311th Airborne Battalion continued their march on Kolwezi. Some twenty-five

kilometers from Kolwezi, Mahele came upon a company from the 133rd Infantry Battalion guarding the bridge. Mahele ordered the unit commander to join his column leaving the crucial bridge unguarded. Moving on westward toward Kolwezi, Mahele ran into an ambush. Despite this being their first time under fire, the troops responded well, quickly dismounting and assaulting the ambush. However, the rebels' fire was intense and Mahele sensed his men were near the point of breaking and running. Mahele sprang forward and rallying his men, broke the ambush at a cost of four dead and ten wounded troopers.<sup>106</sup>

After reorganizing his troops and caring for the wounded, Mahele moved out once again. Just short of the Kolwezi airport, the 311th struck another ambush. Mahele responded by leading the counterattack and his men pushed the rebels back. Surging through the scattering rebels, the 311th rallied and drove through to the airport, securing the field by midday. Though the FNLC made a few half-hearted attempts to regain the airfield, Mahele's men held. Luckily, the rebels gave up around dusk as Mahele's unit was almost out of ammunition. Now the undermanned unit was almost in as great a danger as the Europeans in Kolwezi.<sup>107</sup>

North of the airfield in the European sectors of the city, the rebels were engaged in "a hunt for whites". William "Bill" Starkey, an American employee of Morris-Knudsen, had been a virtual prisoner in his home for the past several days. On the 17th the rebels came to his house and escorted him to the edge of town. After telling him to run, the rebels shot Starkey and left him for dead. Waiting until his assassins had departed, Starkey managed to stumble to the GECAMINES hospital for help. At the lake south of the town, the fifty odd prisoners whom Maurice Faverjon had seen the





previous day were marched into the water and shot. Other killings took place throughout the city. Many were committed by the locally recruited youth rather than the FNLC regulars. Indiscriminate firing was going on all over the town, including random air attacks by FAZ Mirage fighters. An American Methodist missionary, Harold Amstutz, interrupted a radio contact pleading with the authorities to halt the attacks. Seizing and beating the GECAMINES manager for Kolwezi, the rebels forced him to transmit a message that afternoon warning, "MILITARY AUTHORITIES (INVADERS) HERE EXPECT A FOREIGN PARATROOP INTERVENTION. THIS WILL BE CONSIDERED AN ACT OF WAR. THE SITUATION IS VERY DELICATE."<sup>108</sup>

Foreign paratroops might have been going to intervene, but by midday it was clear that they were not going to be American troops. At 0718 Morris-Knudsen had begun its evacuation of the base camp northwest of Kolwezi. Using helicopters and trucks, the company moved seventy-seven of its people to Musonie. From there, DC3s flew them to Kananga and safety. By 1512, the evacuation was over. Of the 233 Americans in Shaba, all but thirteen were out of danger. As for the unfortunates in Kolwezi, they could only hope that foreign troops were on the way.<sup>109</sup>

The morning of the 17th, André Ross, the French ambassador, sat in his office holding another cable from the Belgian Consul in Lubumbashi. Intended for Brussels, the cable begged for an intervention within twenty-four hours. Otherwise, warned the Belgian, there would be massacres in Kolwezi. Ross transmitted the cable to Paris, praying it would force the Belgian government to act thus freeing the French authorities from their self-imposed inaction.<sup>110</sup>

But the period of French restraint was ending. At 0700, Colonel Gras received the authority for his Mirage instructor pilots to fly strike missions against the rebels. Heartened by the message, Gras called in his planning team to go over the results of their efforts.<sup>111</sup>

Kolwezi, the focus of the planning effort, was not an easy target. As the center of Zaire's mining industry, Kolwezi produced or processed 75 percent of the copper and 90 percent of the cobalt exported by GECAMINES. The population reflected the importance of the city, consisting of some 143 thousand in a sixty mile radius. Tied to the rest of the country by the Benguela railroad, Kolwezi had grown in a sprawling fashion around the railhead and GECAMINES facilities.<sup>112</sup>

European Kolwezi consisted of two areas referred to as old and new towns. Old town made up the western half of the city and new town the eastern section. The central railroad station linked the two halves, together covering around eight kilometers east to west and three kilometers north to south. Inside these European districts the housing was luxurious by African standards with wide tree-lined avenues, walled in villas with gardens, and modern facilities such as a hospital, schools, and cinema.

Outside these districts, Kolwezi was a conglomeration of native towns with crowded company housing for the fortunate or shacks for the majority. The city had two airfields. The main airport, some five kilometers south, was about four kilometers in length. Paved, it could handle C130s but nothing much larger or heavier. The other strip was the flying club field, a grass strip just north of the old town. Outside the urban areas of Kolwezi was the African bush. Varying from a dense jungle of towering trees to savannah studded with nine foot high termite hills, the bush began at the

city's limits. Once outside its confines, eleven foot high elephant grass blocked almost all lateral vision, turning 'clearings' into miniature forests.

Colonel Gras had given his planners guidance on how he envisioned the operation. Surprise and speed were the critical elements in this case. Only by securing all the city simultaneously could an attacking force prevent the rebels from turning on the hostages. Such an approach demanded the use of multiple drop zones. But, Gras wanted the drop zones on the same east-west axis so that the force commander could shift forces at the last minute without forcing the FAZ pilots to alter their course. He figured the rebels would have occupied most of the public buildings like the Jean XXIII school, the GECAMINES Hospital, the post offices, and offices. To reach all these places rapidly required as many troops on the ground as soon as possible.<sup>113</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Vagner accommodated Gras' concept in his study of the problem. He picked two drop zones. First was the old flying club airstrip just north of the old town and west of the new town. Second was the open area east of the FAZ headquarters in new town. From these two drop zones the force could fan out into most of the European areas. The plan did involve risk. With the troops jumping right along side of the city, they would be landing almost on top of the rebels. Gras pointed out that the French had done the same thing successfully in Indochina against a more dangerous foe than the FNLC. By using close air support prior to the operation, the risk of landing on an organized foe could be reduced. There was also a danger from shoulder fired surface to air missiles, but Gras accepted the danger as minimal since no missiles had been fired against FAZ Mirages during the week. Less spectacular than the enemy threat but more likely to affect the

operation's outcome was the risk of pilot error. If the FAZ pilots were off in their approach, the force might have to land inside the towns or out in the bush. When Vagner suggested using the main airfield, Gras told him to go with the drop zones closer to the city. Better to run the risks involved jumping in close than land on the airstrip five kilometers from the city. The mission was to rescue the hostages inside the city, not to conduct an airborne operation to seize an airfield. Certainly the plan entailed risks and Gras recognized that only a highly trained unit would be able to complete such a mission successfully. Shortly afterward, Gras received a message that removed his doubts about the concept's demand for well-trained and well-led troops. At 1100, Paris notified him that the *2ème Régiment Étranger de Parachutistes* (R.E.P.) was on alert for deployment to Zaire.<sup>114</sup>

Five thousand miles away on the island of Corsica, the phone rang in the headquarters of the 2nd R.E.P. General Liron, commander of the *2ème Brigade Parachutiste*, was calling for Lieutenant Colonel Phillippe Erulin. Taking the phone, Erulin, the 2nd R.E.P.'s commander, was surprised to hear he had six hours to prepare his unit for deployment to Zaire. The disbelieving Erulin protested he would need twenty hours rather than six to prepare. Nevertheless, Liron stood by his orders. Erulin ordered the alert signal activated and Camp Raffali, the unit's home, turned into an antbed.<sup>115</sup>

Like the Belgian Paracommando Regiment, the 2nd R.E.P. had a short but spectacular career. Created in Morocco in 1948 as the *2ème Battalion Étranger de Parachutistes* (B.E.P.), the unit deployed to Indochina the following year. From then on, the 2nd B.E.P. fought almost continuously until it was annihilated in the disaster at Dien Bien Phu. Reconstituted and renamed the *2ème Régiment Étranger de Parachutistes*, the unit left

Indochina in 1955 after a loss of 775 men. Arriving in Algeria soon afterward, the 2nd R.E.P. again found itself fighting another war until the French pulled out in 1961. In 1967, the 2nd R.E.P. was integrated into the regular French army as part of the 11th Airborne Division. Based in Camp Raffali, named after a battalion commander killed in Viet Nam, the 2nd R.E.P. had continued to respond to calls for overseas duty in places such as Djibouti and Chad.<sup>116</sup>

Though Colonel Erulin protested the impossible time schedule, he knew his men could meet it. The unit had been on a forty-eight hour movement status for two of its companies; now, it had to upgrade to a six hour alert with a motorized force, two companies, and a mounted reconnaissance section. The 2nd R.E.P. had but four line companies, a combat support company, and a headquarters and support company. Each line company specialized in a particular field of combat. The 1st Company was the unit's expert in infantry anti-tank warfare. Second Company concentrated on mountain and winter warfare, and the 3rd on amphibious techniques, including combat swimmer and SCUBA skills. Fourth Company practiced the skills of sabotage and sniping. Each unit then taught its particular area of expertise to the remainder of the R.E.P. The Combat Support Company had a reconnaissance section trained in freefall parachuting, a mortar section, and a Milan antitank missile section. All told, 2nd R.E.P. had around seven hundred men. Much like a U.S. Army Ranger battalion, the 2nd R.E.P. was a formidable foe.<sup>117</sup>

With the present alert, Colonel Erulin's major problem was his regiment was scattered over all of Corsica conducting training. He had to recall men from those training areas and get them ready to deploy.

Complicating the problem was the unit's chronic shortage of officers. Out of forty-two infantry officers assigned to the 2nd R.E.P., ten were deployed elsewhere- seven were in Chad- and four had to be used in support capacities that prohibited their deployment. Consequently, Erulin had but twenty-five officers to conduct the operation. Therefore, he relied very heavily on his NCOs to ready the force for movement. They did not fail him. At 2000 hours, the 2nd R.E.P. was ready. When no further word came in Erulin showed his experience by ordering the troops bedded down. All officers and NCOs received similar instructions as they were released to go home. With a duty officer in each company, the 2nd R.E.P. rested and waited.<sup>118</sup>

For Colonel Yves Gras, the waiting was rapidly becoming intolerable. Following the news that the 2nd R.E.P. was on alert, Gras and his staff were able to refine their plan to retake Kolwezi. He wished he could count on the support of Belgian paras to cut off any rebel escape routes, but Gras had by this time come to discount the cooperation of the Belgians. Instead, he was examining this operation as a French-Zairian effort. When he learned that evening the 311th Airborne Battalion under Major Mahele had pushed on to seize the Kolwezi airfield, Gras was not pleased. He felt the 311th had been over-extended and more seriously, had left the Lualaba bridge open. Once again, Yves Gras called the Élysée and demanded action. Asking for the movement of the 2nd R.E.P., Gras told General Vanbremeersch he intended to conduct the operation on the morning of the 20th. At midnight 17 May, the word came back from Paris. The 2nd R.E.P. was deploying with four companies and its mortars. Gras was ordered to take command of the operation.<sup>119</sup>

The movement order to the 2nd R.E.P. virtually guaranteed the French commitment to intervene. It also sparked a debate between Paris and Brussels over the correct approach to the conflict. In keeping with President d'Estaing's activist approach toward the continent of Africa, France was as much concerned with the reestablishment of Zaire's internal security as she was in safeguarding the expatriates. The French did not approach the problem as an evacuation operation. The 2nd R.E.P., acting under Gras' orders, was going to Zaire to kill rebels in order to save the Europeans. Brussels focused on the expatriates' safety. Despite Belgium's business interests in Zaire and a desire to secure those investments, the government remembered the bitter lesson of the 1964 operation. More expatriates were killed after that intervention than before. Regardless of the alert of the Paracommando Regiment, Brussels still held hopes that a negotiated release of the foreigners might take place through the Red Cross. The difference between the two European neighbors was fundamental. Belgium's Foreign Minister, Mr. Simonet attempted to minimize the dispute saying, "My French colleague told me that the view of his government was humanitarian but that it also wanted to restore order. It was not a question of any difference in views between Paris and Brussels, but a difference in perspective." Simonet was merely engaged in the diplomatic art of dissimulation.<sup>120</sup>

For the United States the situation had at the same time become more clear on one hand and more confused. With the success of Morris-Knudsen's evacuation of the majority of the Americans, the pressure on Washington D.C. to act had diminished dramatically. True, there remained in Kolwezi thirteen or fourteen Americans, but the French and Belgians appeared ready- to American eyes- to conduct a combined rescue. It did not appear likely the



82nd Airborne Division would be needed. All in all, the crisis so far had worked to the Carter Administration's benefit by allowing it to conduct a relatively cheap display of determination. All the United States was going to be required to do was to supply strategic airlift to the French and the Belgians. That turned out to be more complicated than had been expected as the possibility of a single combined operation fell apart. Instead, the United States was going to end up supporting two independent operations with the same target.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>Sergent, 82-83: MMF; Gras, 695. The original plan had been to drop the 2nd Company from two C130s. But when one developed engine problems, a Colonel Yeka ordered the drop to go in two waves of 60 troops each. It was truly an incredibly stupid operation from its conception to its ill-fated end. Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04934, DTG. 171947Z MAY 78, SHABA INVASION-SITREP 3 (MAY 17, 1978).

<sup>91</sup>Sergent, 84. Sergent makes some conclusions on this that do not make sense. First he says that the FAZ troops thought the drop was a Cuban operation. Then he says this caused the FAZ to collapse. But other sources speak of the 2nd Company survivors making it to the FAZ headquarters. I believe the survivors of the airborne operation probably demoralized the FAZ headquarters which had been waiting for relief for three days only to see it wiped out.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 85-86. Again, Sergent's logic is faulty as to the origin of the slaughter on the 16th. He implies that it was caused by a report by the FNLC on the airborne operation to their liaison in Brussels. He says that these FNLC politicians changed the wording to reflect a European airborne operation and issued a press release claiming to have killed one hundred European paratroops. Then Western news agencies picked up the reports and broadcast them as fact. The FNLC upon hearing the reports, blamed the Europeans and started killing them.

All that is apparently true but the reports did not get out until the 17th and Sergent reports the massacres began on the 16th. He further claims that the Cuban advisors to the FNLC departed after the drop and this loss of control allowed the FNLC's discipline to fail.

I do not support either claim. It appears that the FNLC was already on the edge when the 2nd company jumped. The rebels probably turned on the expatriates out of fear and resentment. They probably believed a major counterattack was in progress and began killing the Europeans in response.

Even Legum stretches for a reason for the killings. He accuses the FAZ of using the expatriates as hostages against rebel attacks. On the other hand he suggests, based on refugee reports, that the French training mission jumped with the 2nd company and this started the killings. The reports of the survivors of the massacre do not support the first claim and the MMF journal and Gras document that the 311th went to Lubumbashi without its advisors. Legum, ACR77-78, B574-B575.

<sup>93</sup>Sergent, 88-90.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 91; Gras, 695-696; MMF; Malu, 58-59. Once again, I have to break with Sergent's account. Out of all the sources, he is the only one who states that Major Mahele made it to Kolwezi on the 16th. He also states Mobutu flew into the airfield on the 17th. All sources say that Mobutu made a news media event of the trip on the 18th. Had Mahele taken the airfield on the 16th, I do not believe Mobutu would have waited until the 18th.

<sup>95</sup>Gras, 695-696; MMF; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY PARIS, 123886, DTG. 160836Z MAY 78, DISCUSSION WITH FRENCH AND BELGIANS ON SHABA.

<sup>96</sup>Gras, 695-696; MMF; Sergent, 75-76, 80-81. If Mobutu had staged the 311th's operation in order to stimulate a western intervention, I believe he would have notified the western officials at this interview. Instead, he waited until the news of the operation came in -and he still maintained that it had been a success.

<sup>97</sup>Sergent, 76-77; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC INFO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA, 123870, DTG. 160125Z MAY 78, SHABA INVASION SITREP 1 (MAY 15, 1978). According to this message, the rebels had tried to consolidate the expatriates on the 13th but had given up after learning there were 3000 in Kolwezi. According to Sergent, Ross' cable resulted in another phone call by d'Estaing to Mobutu who repeated his earlier assertion that all was going well.

<sup>98</sup>Sergent, 77-78.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 79; Gras, 695-696; MMF.

<sup>100</sup>Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI, 04811, DTG. 160110Z MAY 78, SHABA INVASION: EVACUATION OF CIS PERSONNEL FROM KOLWEZI; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA, 123864; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA, 124005, DTG. 161610Z MAY 78, SHABA SITREP NO. 3 AS OF 1000 HOURS GMT, MAY 16; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04863, DTG. 161733Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: EVACUATION OF CIS PERSONNEL FROM KOLWEZI; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04865, 161753Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: CONVERSATION WITH MOBUTU; Message, AMEMBASSY PARIS TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 15476, DTG. 161737Z MAY 78, DISCUSSIONS WITH FRENCH ON SHABA; (cont.) Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY PARIS, 123886, DTG. 160836Z MAY 78, DISCUSSION WITH FRENCH AND BELGIANS ON SHABA; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04841, DTG. 161257Z MAY 78, SHABA INVASION (SITREP 2)- MAY 16, 1978; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA, 125209, DTG. 171230Z MAY 78, SHABA SITREP NO. 4: 2300 GMT MAY 16; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04844, DTG. 161413Z MAY 78, CONSULATE LUBUMBASHI INPUT TO SHABA INVASION SITREP 2; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04880, DTG. 170027Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: EVACUATION OF CIS PERSONNEL FROM KOLWEZI; "U.S. SET TO EVACUATE 73 CITIZENS IN ZAIRE", *New York Times* (NYT), May 17, 1978, A1, A8; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY PARIS, 125187, DTG. 170307Z MAY 78, SHABA INCURSION : POSSIBLE RESCUE EFFORT.

<sup>101</sup>Odom, 54.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.; Depoorter, 30-31.

<sup>103</sup>FORUM, 12-13; Emile Genot, *Bérets rouges, Bérets verts... 50.000 Paracommandos* (Bruxelles: Gutenberg Editions, 1986), 266.

<sup>104</sup>Depoorter, 32; Genot, 264-265; FORUM, 6-7; Message, AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 09311, DTG. 161816Z MAY 78, SHABA INCURSIONS: BELGIAN REACTION.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Sergent, 91-95; Malu, 58-59; MMF; Gras, 696. It appears that the company of the 133rd was at the bridge to protect it as originally planned by Gras. However, Gras and Mahele did not know that it was there. Malu reports that Mahele took the company with him to Kolwezi as does the MMF journal and Gras. Sergent reports that Mahele told the company commander to hold or die.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Carroll, et al. "Massacre", 35; Sergent, 89; "Massacre in Zaire", U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, June 5, 1978, 41-42; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04946, DTG. 181113Z MAY 78, SHABA II SITREP, MAY 18 1978; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04943, DTG. 180955Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK- SITREP 4(MAY 18, 1978); Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04919, DTG. 171500Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: STATUS REPORT ON CIS EVACUATION OF KOLWEZI BASE CAMP; 1230 ZULU MAY 17; Paul Emmanuel, "We Will Return to Kolwezi", BRUSSELS SPECIAL, 14 June 1978, 50-53(translated in JPRS).

<sup>109</sup>Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04880; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY PARIS, 125187; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04882, DTG. 170817Z MAY 78, STATUS REPORT ON CIS EVACUATION OF KOLWEZI BASE CAMP; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04899, DTG. 171028Z MAY 78, STATUS REPORT CIS EVACUATION OF KOLWEZI BASE CAMP AS OF 0939 ZULU; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04902, DTG. 171129Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: STATUS REPORT OF CIS EVACUATION OF KOLWEZI CAMP; 1030 ZULU; Message, AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA, 00489, DTG. 171305Z MAY 78, E AND E PLAN; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04919; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA, 125218, DTG. 171415Z MAY 78, SHABA SITREP NO. 5 AS OF 1000 GMT, MAY 17; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC 04921, DTG. 171527Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: STATUS REPORT ON CIS EVACUATION OF KOLWEZI BASE CAMP; 1430 ZULU.

<sup>110</sup>Sergent, 107-108.

<sup>111</sup>MMF.

<sup>112</sup>Message, AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 00482, 171044Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: WHY KOLWEZI?

<sup>113</sup>Gras, 697; Sergent, 110-111.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.; MMF.

<sup>115</sup>Sergent, 101-102; Le Colonel Erulin, Commandant le 2ème Régiment Étranger de Parachutistes, a Monsieur le Général, Commandant la 11ème Division Parachutiste, "OBJET: Operation BONITE", Calvi, France, le 24 Juin 1978; Le Colonel Erulin, "Mission Accomplie: Entretien avec le colonel Erulin, commandant le 2ème R.E.P.", Armées Aujourd'hui, Juillet-Aout 1978, 14; Colonel Erulin, ZAIRE: SAUYER KOLWEZI (Paris, France: Eric Baschet Editions, 1979), 1.

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116 Pierre Vandervoerde, PARAS du monde entier (Namur, Belgique: WESMAEL-CHARLIER, 1981), 221-223. For a complete history of the 2nd R.E.P. see: Pierre Sergent, PARAS-LEGION: LE 2<sup>ème</sup> B.E.P. EN INDOCHINE (Paris, France: Presses de la Cité, 1982); Pierre Sergent, 2<sup>ème</sup> R.E.P.: ALGERIE, TCHAD, DJIBOUTI, KOLWEZI, BEYROUTH (Paris, France: Presses de la Cité, 1985).

117 Erulin, "BONITE"; Erulin, "Mission", 14; Sergent, 102, 240.

118 Sergent, 101, 104-106; Erulin, "BONITE"; Lieutenant Colonel Jacques Hatte, "KOLWEZI: AN AIRBORNE ASSAULT" Infantry, May, 1979, 25.

119 Gras, 696-697; Sergent, 111.

120 The Belgian government came under fire from the Belgian press over its handling of the crisis. Mobutu also took advantage of the situation to blast Brussels for its slow response while at the same time he asked for more aid. The Belgian public apparently approved the action finally taken, but was equally sure that the response had come too late. Despite Simonet's statement on it only being a difference in perspective, he later referred to the French action as a form of colonialism. At the same time however he admitted the 2nd R.E.P. had been decisive in saving lives. Prime Minister Tindemans made the link with 1964 when he said the deployment of the paras could have started new massacres. Jacques Cordy, "Voler au secours de Mobutu? La France hésite..." LE SOIR, 17 Mai 1978, no page number; J.v.C. "L'intervention belge à Stanleyville en novembre 1964" LE SOIR, 17 Mai 1978, no page number; Robert Falony, "La plus grande prudence..." Le Peuple, 17 Mai 1978, 1; Susa Nudelhole, "GENDARMES", le drapeau rouge, 17 Mai 1978, 1; "Inquiétude sur le sort des Européens à Kolwezi", LA LIBRE BELGIOUE, 17 Mai 1978, 1.4; "S'il faut sauver les Européens bloqués à Kolwezi, les mesures nécessaires ont été prises", LE SOIR, 18 Mai 1978, 1.3; "Préoccupation no. 1: l'évacuation éventuelle des Occidentaux de Kolwezi", LE SOIR, 18 Mai 1978, 3; "M. Henri Simonet à la Chambre: il ne s'agirait pas d'une immixtion", LE SOIR, 18 Mai 1978, 3; Jacques Cordy, "La France n'entend pas se faire 'pieger' au Zaïre, mais si la 'guerre' du Shaba devait s'aggraver..." LE SOIR, 18 Mai 1978, 3; Jean-Paul Vankeerberghen, "La canonnière", le drapeau rouge, 18 Mai 1978; Alain de Fooz, "Are We Prepared?", BRUSSELS SPECIAL, 12 June 1978, 10-12 (translated in JPRS); "Belgian Public Opinion Poll Approves Saha Intervention", BRUSSELS SPECIAL, 14 June 1978, 8-9 (translated in JPRS); "Commentary", LA LIBRE BELGIOUE, 24 May 1978 (translated in JPRS); "Des paras belges et français sont partis, mais une solution pacifique reste possible", LE SOIR, 19 Mai 1978, 1-3; "Paras belges et français au Zaïre", "Pour la France le sauvetage concernerait aussi les Zaïrois", LE SOIR, 19 Mai 1978, 3; Frédéric Kiesel, "Des soucis ambigus", LA CITE, 18 Mai 1978, 1; "L'opération de sauvetage des Européens de Kolwezi sera-t-elle nécessaire?", LA LIBRE BELGIOUE, 19 Mai 1978, 1; "LE FIL DES EVENEMENTS, RUE DE LA LOI", LA LIBRE BELGIOUE, 19 Mai 1978, no page number; "Irritation zaïroise contre M. Simonet", LA LIBRE BELGIOUE, 19 Mai 1978, no page number; D. de M., "Paris: le gouvernement veut garder son sang-froid", LA LIBRE BELGIOUE, 19 Mai 1978, 3; "Les Européens de Kolwezi pris dans les combats et poursuivis par la haine des ex-gendarmes", LA LIBRE BELGIOUE, 19 mai 1978, no page number; M.H., "La situation au Shaba prime toutes les autres préoccupations gouvernementales", LE PEUPLE, 19 Mai 1978, 1; "SHABA: C'EST L'AVENTURE NEO-COLONIALE", le drapeau rouge, 19 Mai 1978, 1;

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Paras belges et francais ont commencé une opération sauvetage" La Dernière Heure, 19  
Mai 1978, 28.

121 Legum. ACR77-78, 576; Message, AMEMBASSY PARIS TO SECSTATE  
WASHDC, 15662, DTG. 171734Z MAY 78, SHABA INCURSION: POSSIBLE RESCUE EFFORT;  
Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 04935, DTG. 172004Z MAY 78,  
SHABA ATTACK: ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT REQUEST FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE IN  
INTERNATIONAL CONTINGENCY OPERATION; Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY  
KINSHASA, 126030, DTG. 180138Z MAY 78, SITUATION IN SHABA AS OF 2000 HOURS (GMT),  
MAY 17, 1978 (NO. 6); Message, SECSTATE WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA-FLASH  
126065, DTG. 180609Z MAY 78, SHABA INCURSION ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT REQUEST FOR  
U.S. ASSISTANCE IN INTERNATIONAL CONTINGENCY OPERATION; Message, SECSTATE  
WASHDC TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA, FLASH 126070, DTG. 180743Z MAY 78, SHABA  
INCURSION ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT REQUEST FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE IN INTERNATIONAL  
CONTINGENCY OPERATION; "Most Americans Said to Leave War Zone", NYT, May 18, 1978,  
A3.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE WEST REACTS

With the order to assume command of the operation to retake Kolwezi, Colonel Yves Gras slept very little the evening of the 17th. Neither did Lieutenant Colonel Vagner or Commandant Capelli. Gras had them back at work by 0100. After telling Vagner to plan on using FAZ airlift, Gras gave his subordinates until 0700 to have the order completed. The FAZ had five C130s and with two additional French C160s, Vagner could put around five hundred rigged paras on the ground in a single lift. A second wave would be needed to get the remainder of the 2nd R.E.P. on the drop zone. Vagner and Capelli were up to the task. At 0700, Vagner presented the plan. Approved by Gras, the plan for Operation Leopard was soon on the way to Paris.<sup>122</sup>

Around 0830, a new message came into Gras' office. Gras was amazed to read the latest from Paris; the General Staff wanted to know if Gras could advance the date of the operation from 200630 May to the 19th. After a quick staff meeting, Gras replied in the negative. He wanted air support and the FAZ pilots had fired all the ammunition for their Mirage fighters. The resupply of ammunition would have to be flown down from Ndjamena, Chad and could not be in until the morning of the 19th. Furthermore, Gras knew that the 2nd R.E.P. would need some time to rest and study the plan. To go on the 19th risked not having enough time to get all the force on the ground before sunset. No, the operation had to go on the 20th as planned.<sup>123</sup>

Outside factors began to affect the execution of Operation Leopard. During the afternoon a disgusted André Ross handed Colonel Gras a copy of a Radio France International broadcast. Dated that morning, the transcript reported the deployment of eleven hundred Belgian Paracommandos and twelve C130s to Kamina, Zaire. The Paras, stated the report, were going to rescue the Europeans in Kolwezi. With the rebels already making threats should the West chose to intervene, both Ross and Gras understood why Paris had asked to move up the operation. As if that were not sufficient to disturb the rebels in Kolwezi, Gras was stunned to learn that Mobutu had flown his C130 into the Kolwezi airport. Of course, the Zairian had a full complement of newsmen along to cover the event. With a Mirage conveniently staging a strike in the background, Mobutu met an amazed Major Mahele while the crew off-loaded needed supplies.<sup>124</sup>

While Mobutu made his gesture, a gesture that had cost the 2nd Company of the 311th Airborne and the lives of over one hundred expatriates, the pressure on Gras to act grew steadily. The situation was not without irony as Mr. Journiac called Colonel Gras at 1500 to repeat the request that the operation take place on the 19th. Telling Gras, "You are the soul judge," Journiac accepted Gras' negative response. Gras' reasoning for refusing remained the same, plus the chance to coordinate the operation with the Belgians was not completely gone.<sup>125</sup>

At 1700, Gras attended a meeting with General's Babia and Ginga of the FAZ, Colonel Geraci of the American military mission ZAMISH, and Colonel Bleus of the Belgian military mission. Major Van Melle was also present. After General Babia had announced Mobutu's safe return, he turned the meeting over to Bleus who gave the arrival schedule for the



Paracommando Regiment at Kamina. After sharing the 2nd R.E.P.'s schedule, Gras and Bleus agreed on a combined operation. The Belgians were to use eight C130s from Kamina and the French four FAZ C130s and four C160s from Ndjili. The aircraft were to rendezvous over Kamina and attack together. To facilitate planning, the Belgian command group was to fly to Kinshasa for a meeting at 1100 on the 19th. The United States Air Force was to ferry in fuel to support the airlift using C141s beginning the 19th. General Babia asked Colonel Bleus what the Belgians intended: "Are you planning an evacuation? That would only take forty-eight hours and would collapse GECAMINES' operation and Zaire's economy." Bleus responded that he thought it was a rescue but promised the troop commander would know. Gras stated the French were coming to restore order for the population--both black and white. The meeting was the closest the two NATO allies would come to a combined operation. 126

Colonel Yves Gras came away from the meeting convinced that the Belgian, Colonel Bleus, had absolutely no mandate to plan a combined operation with the French. The question became *passé* when General Babia called Gras to his quarters and showed him an intercepted message from the FNLC commander General Mbumba. The message directed the rebels to kill their hostages, destroy the mines, and evacuate most of the local population. Faced with this increased threat- caused no doubt by news media announcements on the Belgian deployment- and the unlikely possibility of a combined operation with the Belgians, Gras decided to move the date up to the 19th at 0700. When the Zairians promised to have the FAZ C130s ready, Gras returned to his residence to call General Payrat. Afterwards, Gras held yet another meeting with his staff and gave them the new schedule. Vagner

was to brief at 190300. At 2200, Gras informed his Zairian, American, and Belgian counterparts of his intentions to act the next day. At 2315, Lieutenant Colonel Phillipe Erulin landed at Ndjili airport.<sup>127</sup>

The movement order had come into 2nd R.E.P. headquarters at Camp Raffali at 180220 for deployment commencing 0930. With Solenarza, the airbase designated in the order, a good three hour drive on Corsica's winding roads, Erulin's unit had little time to waste. At 0510 the first truck rolled out the gate and by 0600 all were on the road. The 2nd R.E.P. was deploying in two echelons: the first with 634 men of the assault force, and the second with the sixty-nine drivers for the vehicles that the U.S.A.F. would airlift to Lubumbashi.<sup>128</sup>

The regiment began arriving at Solenarza at 0900. Lieutenant Colonel Alaine Benezit and Captain Stephane Coevoet were charged on getting the men organized to board the jets that would fly them to Kinshasa. Supposedly five DC8s were to arrive at 0930. Then the numbers changed to three contract DC8s, one air force DC8, and a single Boeing 707. Since the contract DC8s had civilian crews the troops could not board with weapons. Still they were ready at 0930 and then they waited. At 1130 a single aircraft landed with their division commander. General Lacaze had come to wish them luck and to tell them the massacres had already begun in Kolwezi. Finally the planes arrived, and at 1520 Erulin lifted off in the lead aircraft.<sup>129</sup>

When Phillipe Erulin boarded his aircraft, he believed he had until the 20th to get his unit ready to jump on Kolwezi. Now at 2315 after a seven hour flight, he learned that his unit was going into combat the following day. Greeted at the aircraft by Lieutenant Colonels Vagner and Ballade, Erulin

took the change in stride. Less than fifteen minutes later, he had Benezit and Capelli figuring manifests for five C130s and two C160s. Meanwhile Erulin and Vagner closeted together to study the plan. Again, time was limited: the briefing was to be at 0300 and the first wave was to go at 0700.<sup>130</sup>

The appointed briefing hour, 0300, came and went as a frustrated Vagner waited for a missing Colonel Gras. All of the 2nd R.E.P.'s command group had been on the ground since 0200 and they were anxious to get on with the briefing. By this time, it was clear that the last two aircraft would not arrive until 0830 and the initial wave of four companies would have to be reduced. With his prospective audience clearly showing signs of frustration, Vagner began the briefing around 0330.<sup>131</sup>

Mr. Bommier, a retired French officer and former attaché in Kinshasa, presented a summary of the problems leading up to the crisis. Now working as a logistics advisor to the FAZ, Bommier knew the subject well and he proceeded to delve into Zairian history since 1960. Gradually he covered the evolution of the FNLC and its turbulent past. Vagner knew the long-winded Bommier was in trouble when he heard one wag in the audience mutter "before he finishes the war will be over."<sup>132</sup>

Just as the tedious speaker finished, an agitated Yves Gras walked into the room and began the operation briefing. Of all the mornings to have a flat tire Gras' luck had dictated this one- with the added touch of a missing jack. Actually, the French colonel was lucky to be alive after blowing a tire at 120 kilometers per hour. His luck continued and Gras had managed to wave down a passing Belgian in order to get to the airport. Determined to portray

an air of confidence, he walked into the briefing and began without bothering to wash the dirt from his hands.<sup>133</sup>

Gras gave a summary of his concept for taking the city. The 2nd R.E.P. would first take the old and new towns to secure the European areas, then the airport should an air evacuation become necessary. To accomplish these tasks, Gras said an initial assault of a small headquarters element, two companies, and the mortars, some 405 men, would drop on the flying club strip. This assault would seize likely rebel positions throughout the two towns. If possible that same day, a second wave of two more companies of two hundred men was to jump either on the flying strip or on Drop Zone B east of the new town. Once the town was completely secure, the 2nd R.E.P. would link up with the FAZ at the main airfield. With that he turned the briefing over to Lieutenant Colonel Vagner.<sup>134</sup>

Reviewing the enemy situation, Vagner began his presentation. The enemy was believed to control most of Kolwezi with several thousand well-armed men. Though it had been reported the enemy had begun a westerly withdrawal on the 18th, it was certain that one or two thousand of the rebels remained in the area of Kolwezi. These rebels had heavy weapons and might have French AML armored cars taken from the FAZ. The FNLC had probably established strongpoints in the Hotel Impala, the GECAMINES hospital, and the post office in the old town. In the new town, the rebels probably controlled the railroad bridge that linked the two European quarters, along with the principle municipal centers like the market and gas station. Vagner pointed out that Manika was the rebels' base of support and would be the most difficult area to control. He warned the men the enemy would be able to fire at them as they exited their aircraft. But, he concluded that the rebels

would probably not mount a concerted counter-attack. More likely, the rebels would react with uncoordinated actions before withdrawing.<sup>135</sup>

As for the friendly situation, Vagner briefed that more than two thousand Europeans were under rebel control in Kolwezi. He warned that some had already been killed and others were hostages in locations such as the Jean XXIII school or GECAMINES hospital. Concerning the FAZ, it controlled the main airfield but nothing else. According to Vagner, the local population could be considered neutral, with the exception of those living in Manika.<sup>136</sup>

Giving the mission, Vagner briefed the 2nd R.E.P. would parachute the 19th of May on Kolwezi to regain control of the city as rapidly as possible to reestablish and maintain order, thus protecting the expatriate population. To accomplish this, the regiment would jump in two waves: the first with three companies on DZ 'A'; and the second with two companies on either DZ 'A' or 'B' depending on how the situation developed. Ending the formal briefing at 0430, Vagner worked with Erulin to assign company missions under the concept of the operation.<sup>137</sup>

The 1st Company, jumping on DZ 'A', was to move as rapidly as possible into the southern part of the old town to take the Jean XXIII school. The company was to cut off rebel movement to the south and clean out the area between the school and the *Institute Notre-Dames des Lumières* all the way to the southern edge of the town. Also jumping on DZ 'A', the 2nd Company was to assemble along the west side of the DZ. Moving alongside the west of 1st Company, 2nd Company was to take the GECAMINES hospital, liberate any hostages found there, and cut off rebel movement to the west. Special instructions to the 2nd Company included searching the GECAMINES

garages for vehicles suitable for use by the regiment. The 3rd Company was to jump on DZ 'A' in the first wave and to move east and south taking the bridge between the two towns and the Hotel Impala and the Post Office. It was to cut off all movement between the two towns and the native quarter, Manika. The 3rd Company had as its area of responsibility all of the old town east of 1st Company's zone and was to be prepared for operations into the new town.<sup>138</sup>

The second wave was to be the 4th Company, the Scout Platoon, and the Mortar Platoon. The 4th was to jump on either DZ depending on the situation. If it jumped on 'A', the 4th would go into the old town. If it used DZ 'B', the 4th was to take the new town from the rear. The Scouts were to jump on DZ 'A' and clean out the old Gendarmerie camp along with Camp Forrest. As for the mortars, they were to establish a firing position just off of DZ 'A' to support the regiment.<sup>139</sup>

The 2nd R.E.P. also received special instructions. The men were not to fire unless fired upon. Rather than attempt to pull out the expatriates, the men were to encourage the foreign population to remain in place. Should a movement of the Europeans become necessary, central collection points were to be established as needed. Using "a" rules of engagement and the scheme of maneuver developed by Vagner, Erulin told his company commanders they were to occupy critical crossroads and junctions inside the towns. Establishing ambushes and check points at these designated points, the regiment would be able to halt all movement after dark. Consequently, the rebels would not be able to escape with any hostages. After the jump, the units were to move as quickly as possible to these positions without stopping to collect their wounded. Though indiscriminate fire was

prohibited, Erulin told his men to make every shot fired a kill. He wanted his men to force the rebels "to abandon the hostages in order to save their own skins."<sup>140</sup>

It was an audacious plan and as such, it held risks. First it put a great deal of trust in the FAZ C130 pilots to put the men on the DZ. Vagner and Gras recognized this risk and both hoped the pilots were better than the Zairians who flew for *Air Peut-etre* as Air Zaire was commonly called. Furthermore, the operation would be going without the hoped for close air support since there was insufficient time to get the Mirage ammunition in from Chad. The other major risk was the need to get both waves in before dark. Otherwise, the Europeans in the new town would be at the rebels' mercy overnight. Time was an enemy and delays began to gnaw at the operation.<sup>141</sup>

Gradually the enough of the 2nd R.E.P. arrived in Kinshasa to make up the first wave. Thanks to the fact that France maintained semi-permanent over-flight clearance in most of Africa, the airlift was able to take a direct route. Still the diversion of two aircraft to Abidjan, the Ivory Coast, had forced the reduction of the first wave to three companies. There were other problems. The French had borrowed parachutes from the FAZ. The parachutes, American T-10s, would not accept the snap hooks on the French equipment bags. Many of the Legionnaires wired the bags to their harnesses. Nevertheless the 2nd R.E.P. was loaded and ready by 0700, but a heavy fog set in and added further delays. Just when the weather began to clear, Gras' duty officer from the embassy appeared and told him the jump was cancelled. Apparently, Paris had changed its mind.<sup>142</sup>

Convinced by Erulin to try and reverse the decision, Colonel Gras raced back to the embassy. Calling the Élysée, he reached Mr. Journiac who said the operation had not been cancelled and told him to get on with it. After confirming the new order with Army Headquarters, Gras radioed the airfield and ordered Erulin to take off. For the men of the 2nd R.E.P., it was a scramble to rerig and reboard the aircraft. The French had to go looking for the FAZ pilots who had promptly wandered off when the cancellation order had arrived. Just as they were nearly ready, one of the C130s failed. Benezit and Coeveot pulled the men off that aircraft and divided them among the other planes. Then a C160 Transall went down and they had to repeat the performance. By now every aircraft had eighty to eighty-five rigged Legionnaires onboard rather than the specified limit of sixty-four. To climax the circus of confusion, another C160 had a flat tire and required another agonizing hour to reinflate. Finally at 1040, the four C130s and single C160 began their takeoff. By 1104 all were airborne followed by Colonel Gras in the other C160 as a flyi command post.<sup>143</sup>

For the rigged jumpers the next five hours were pure agony. Normally a four hour flight, it took five as the lead C130 got lost. Gras' pilot detected the error in time to get the planes back on course. Still, it was another delay added to the operation. Inside the aircraft, the Legionnaires alternately froze from the air conditioning or sweltered with it turned off. As the flight approached Kolwezi at around 1500, it was absolutely impossible to shift the men enough to raise the seats for jump run. At 1512, the red warning light came on and the prejump sequence of commands began. The troops were not able to safety check each other; they could only wait in agony to get out the door. On one aircraft, Sergeant-Chef Paul



Fanshaw, an American, struggled in vain to get his 'stick' of jumpers in the correct order. Fanshaw, 2nd Section sergeant of the 3rd Company, knew his men were tired; they were now into their third day with very little sleep. Now they were going to jump from an unfamiliar aircraft using American parachutes. At 1515, the jump doors went up and the DZ flashed by six hundred feet below. After an initial dry run to verify the drop zone, the flight swung around for another try.<sup>144</sup>

After yet another fruitless pass, the jump began at 1540--under trying conditions. The FAZ pilots failed to slow down and they did not maintain proper altitudes relative to the other aircraft. One C130 narrowly missed a stick of jumpers by breaking hard to the right of the drop zone. Wind speed was high with an equally high rate of descent due to Kolwezi's 1500 meter altitude above sea level; the Legionnaires were moving laterally as fast as they were vertically. Even under the large American chutes, the Legionnaires slammed into the ground. One unfortunate, legionnaire Strata, was a towed jumper; his static line failed to release his chute. An experienced parachutist, Strata came down on his reserve after his jumpmaster cut him free. Unfortunately, the high winds were out of the north and were pushing the men into the old town. Soldiers landed in gardens, on houses, or in the trees. Some like Erulin landed on top of termite hills, only to fall another nine feet to the ground. Many were simply lost in the elephant grass. One entire antitank section was missing for the next twenty-four hours. Rebel firing rose to meet the Legionnaires. Most of the firing was ineffective, but the 2nd R.E.P. had already suffered its first dead. Corporal Arnold, 3rd Section, 1st Company, was found dead two days later, still in his harness. Still, the unit assembled within ten minutes.<sup>145</sup>



The 3rd Company soon found itself in a spirited fight. After vainly searching for his radio man, Captain Gausseres, the commander, linked up with his 2nd Section under Lieutenant Wilhelm. Using the section's radio, Gausseres confirmed his company was assembled and then ordered it to move. Lieutenant Bourgain, the 1st Section leader, had already had a taste of what lay ahead. Landing in the garden of the Hotel Impala, Bourgain found himself staring at twenty-four pairs of hands--white hands that had been neatly severed at the wrists. Since the hotel was his initial objective, Bourgain gathered his men and charged the building. The inside was worse than the garden; the shaken officer found twenty bodies. Radioing in the information, Colonel Erulin came up on the net and asked if they were white or black. When Bourgain replied they were all black, Erulin told him to search the hotel for the six missing French advisors. In complying, Bourgain failed to find the Frenchmen, but he did find a log book that appeared to have been theirs.<sup>146</sup>

Meanwhile Lieutenant Wilhelm and Sergeant-Chef Fanshaw had reached the overpass connecting the two towns. As Fanshaw set up his defense, he counted heads and came up six short. With only two machine guns and a grenadier, Fanshaw needed heavier weapons. He sent a man off to look for the section's weapons container. Just as Corporal Moran returned with the section's rocket launcher, three Panhard AML armored cars came roaring out of the new town. One, an AML 60, charged their position and Moran let it close to thirty meters before knocking it out. A second armored car, a heavier AML 90, also fired on the section only to be destroyed by a rifle grenade. The third withdrew shortly afterward.<sup>147</sup>

While Fanshaw battled the armored cars, the rest of the 3rd Company moved to cut the principal route out of Manika into the old town. Adjutant Ivanov and the 3rd section got into a long range duel with snipers firing from the roof of the Notre-Dame Church. His section and the 3rd Company command group were pinned down, but Bourgain's snipers, using French F-1 sniper rifles with four power telescopic sights, engaged the rebels and killed three. The 3rd Company resumed its move toward the entrance to Manika.<sup>148</sup>

As Bourgain's section approached the bridge, the rebel fire grew more intense. He sent a squad to maneuver against the bridge, supported by a barrage of rifle grenades to force the rebels back. Threatening their left flank with his third squad, Bourgain took the bridge, cutting off rebel infiltration from Manika. On his southern flank, his snipers under the direction of Sergeant Touami had killed ten rebels with head shots at ranges in excess of three hundred meters. The rebels were concentrated around the *Ecole Technique Officielle* and Bourgain ordered his section NCO, Sergeant Moreau to take the building. While Corporal Callerf enfiladed the rebel withdrawal route with his machine gun, Moreau took the school. Callerf stopped the rebels from retreating six times, each time killing one of the FNLC. When Bourgain got to the school, the rebels had left nine dead behind, along with their weapons.<sup>149</sup>

By this time, Bourgain had realized that he was in an over-extended position. Just as he started to order the men back to safer positions, one Legionnaire heard French voices coming from the nearby police camp. Upon being told of the French cries, Bourgain yelled out, "*Armée Française!*", and received an immediate response from the refugees. Realizing the people

were hostages in a building filled with rebels, Bourgain assaulted the position. Just as the lieutenant kicked the door of the building open, he spotted and killed a rebel who held an armed grenade. In the act of throwing the grenade into a room with twenty-six Europeans and nine blacks, the rebel collapsed and let the explosive roll toward Bourgain. Reacting quickly, the Lieutenant dived back out the door as the grenade exploded harmlessly in the entrance of the building.<sup>150</sup>

Bourgain's actions turned out to be the only incident where direct military action saved hostages from being killed. The reports of a rebel withdrawal were true- as were the reports of massacres in the city. But for the most part, the killings had reached their peak on the 16th and 17th. Most of the FNLC regulars departed for Angola on the 18th. However, the rebels' locally recruited militia and some regulars had remained behind. These were the forces fighting the 2nd R.E.P.<sup>151</sup>

In any case, the thirty-five people huddled in the old Gendarmerie barracks were certainly happy to see Lieutenant Bourgain. One, Charles Dornacker, had been arrested the 16th along with many of his companions. During their stay in the camp, the rebels had threatened them with "trial" almost every day. They had also been witness to daily executions, principally among the natives. As the 2nd R.E.P. jumped that afternoon, a mob had attacked their cell, trying to drag them outside to slaughter. By tying their shirts together into a rope, Dornacker and another European, Frédéric Hautot, had managed to tie the cell door closed against the best efforts of the mob who, fortunately for the prisoners, were only armed with clubs. When the prisoners first heard the firing outside, they wisely waited to cry out until they could identify voices. After Bourgain had killed their

would be murderer, the captives had swarmed over the surprised and not a little embarrassed French officer. Many began singing the *Marseillaise*, the French national anthem. A number of the refugees were wounded, including women and children. One little girl of two and a half had been shot.

Another was covered in her mother's blood; her wounds were invisible. Bourgain had his men gather the shaken survivors and escorted them back to the nearby school for the evening. With his seizure of the camp, 3rd Company had secured its initial objectives.<sup>152</sup>

During the 3rd Company's fight for its objectives, the rest of the 2nd R.E.P. was engaged in securing the remainder of the old town. The 1st Company commander, Captain Michel Poulet, had assembled his unit for its drive to take the Jean XXIII school. Placing his three sections on parallel streets headed south toward the school, the company commander moved out. As the Legionnaires eased cautiously along the streets, the expatriate population began to come out of hiding. The 1st Section, under Lieutenant Rochon, took the school and discovered ten refugees hiding in the basement. Meanwhile, one expatriate had offered to guide Captain Poulet to a rebel command post. Sending the 2nd and 3rd Sections to invest and take the Notre-Dame des Lumieres convent, Poulet and his command section moved with their guide to the suspected rebel position. His 2nd Section reported light contact near the convent with rebels who fled after sustaining several losses, but Poulet's group moved unhindered toward its own objective. After securing the rebel position in a short fight, Poulet discovered of several enemy documents. Later, these documents turned out to be the operations orders for the FNLC plan to seize Shaba. Moving out to the company's objective, the isthmus of land between the two small lakes on the town's

southern limit, Poulet soon found himself walking through a slaughter house; the streets were lined with bodies, both black and white. Finally reaching the position, Poulet discovered the massacre site at the lakes' edges. The 1st Company had secured its objectives.<sup>153</sup>

Just west of the 1st Company's area of operations, the 2nd Company was moving to secure the GECAMINES hospital. Under the command of Captain Dubos- known as 'Bobosse' to his men, the unit was also to secure the hospital, the western grounds of the *Institute Notre-Dames des Lumières* and the GECAMINES garages to look for vehicles. Despite repeated contacts with rebel forces along the route, Dubos' men moved well under fire, responding as if it were just another drill. By dark, Dubos had the hospital which, almost totally destroyed, proved to be useless and his other objectives. The 2nd Company's seizure of the hospital meant that the first wave of the 2nd R.E.P. had completed all its initial missions before sunset. As the night closed on Kolwezi, Erulin could hear his second wave circling above the city.<sup>154</sup>

For the second wave of Operation Leopard, the 19th of May had been a series of frustrations. Shortly after the initial wave had taken off for Kolwezi, the second had boarded an Air Zaire DC10 for Kamina. With Kamina less than an hour's flying time from Kolwezi, Colonel Gras hoped to make up for lost time by having the second wave close at hand. On board the DC10, the 4th Company, the Scouts, and the Mortar Section all attempted to get some needed sleep on the way to Kamina. Along with the remainder of the 2nd R.E.P.'s headquarters element, the DC10 also carried Colonel Larzul, Lieutenant Colonel Vagner, Commandant Capelli, and the 311th Airborne Battalion's advisors under Lieutenant Colonel Ballade. All hoped to join in

the action to retake Kolwezi. At 1600, the DC10 landed at Kamina and its passengers stirred expectantly. Minutes passed and upon asking, the French learned that Kamina did not have a ladder of sufficient height to service a DC10. Minor frustrations began to turn serious as the Legionnaires sat and waited. Finally, a Belgian worker at the field came to their rescue with an ordinary painter's ladder on top of an embarkation ramp.<sup>155</sup>

Even hurrying as rapidly as possible, the 250 men of the second wave still had to draw parachutes and rig for the operation. That required time and it was 1800 before the C130s could take off for Kolwezi. Forty minutes later, the aircraft swung in on the jump run, waiting for a signal as to which drop zone they were to use. Circling over the city, the pilots received the abort signal from Colonel Gras in his flying command post. After conferring with Colonel Erulin, Yves Gras had decided to postpone the second wave. On the ground, Erulin had the old town secured, the western portion of the new town under control, and the entrance to Manika sealed off. The night had already fallen, but the moon had yet to appear. Putting the second wave out into the intense darkness only risked confusion and a very real possibility of the men firing on each other. Though he was not pleased, Gras made the correct decision. After making a futile pass over the airfield to raise the 311th Airborne on the radio, Gras turned for Kinshasa.<sup>156</sup>

As the evening closed in on Kolwezi, Erulin went over the results of the operation so far with Captain Thomas, the intelligence officer of the 2nd R.E.P. Since the airborne operation at 1540, the regiment had liberated at least thirty-five hostages, killed around a hundred rebels, destroyed two AML armored cars, and captured several hundred small arms. In addition, the regiment had captured documents that established the FNLC's strength



and purpose in this second invasion, proving Colonel Yves Gras' suspicions that this was indeed an attempt to wrest all of Shaba from Zaire. Unaware of Legionnaire Arnold's death, Erulin placed friendly casualties at three to four wounded, five missing, and six jump injuries. The 2nd R.E.P. controlled the old town, part of the new town, and the entrance into Manika. For the rest of the evening, Erulin ordered his companies to set out ambushes, taking advantage of the full moon. For the Legionnaires, the night was just another day of action, their third without sleep.<sup>157</sup>

With his command post in the Jean XXIII school, Erulin monitored the night's activity. Once again, 3rd Company seemed to be the most aggressive of his units. Adjutant Ivanov of the 3rd Section reported early in the evening that his men had found two European families hiding in their sector. The terrified-- and starved-- expatriates had been hidden since the morning of the 13th. Next, based on the debriefing of Charles Dornacker, Erulin ordered Captain Gausseres to send a patrol into the new town to search for a suspected slaughter house near the former FAZ headquarters.<sup>158</sup>

Gausseres decided to go himself, taking a small, but well-armed escort. Setting out, the patrol had only gone a few hundred meters when Gausseres began to smell the stench of rotting bodies. Soon, the horrified Frenchman could see bodies scattered around the street, eaten and being eaten by dogs. Gausseres attempted to drive off the dogs and failing in that, considered opening fire on them. Suddenly the sound of firing broke out back in the 3rd Company's sector, and Lieutenant Wilhelm reported that several rebels had attempted to run a road block in a Volkswagen. The lieutenant's men had opened fire killing one and driving the others off. Hearing the report

and asking Gausseres how his search was proceeding, Erulin decided the mission would wait until first light. He ordered Gausseres to return. 159

As the captain turned back, one of his unit's listening posts warned him six rebels were headed toward his position. Gausseres and his men established a hasty ambush and waited. After what seemed ages, the Legionnaires spotted the rebels and opened fire, killing four and recovering five weapons. Aside from a brief firefight near dawn between 2nd Company and a group of rebels, the remainder of the night was fairly quiet, broken only by occasional firing and the incessant growling of the feasting dogs. The 2nd R.E.P. welcomed the morning's light. 160

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- 122Sergent,117-118; Gras, 698; MMF.
- 123Sergent, 128-129; Gras,698; MMF.
- 124Gras, 699; MMF; Emmanuel,"Disorganization".
- 125MMF.
- 126Gras, 699: Gras says that the Belgians decision to fly into Kamina made a cooperative venture impossible. Message,AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC,04993, DTG.182127Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: AIRBORNE OPERATIONS PLANNING;MMF.
- 127Gras,699; MMF;Sergent, 130-131.
- 128Sergent,121-123; Erulin, "BONITE";Erulin, "Mission", 14-15; Hatte,25.
- 129Sergent, 122-126; Erulin, "BONITE";Erulin, "Mission", 14-15;Hatte,25.
- 130Erulin, "BONITE"; Sergent,135-136; Erulin, "Kolwezi".
- 131Ibid.
- 132Sergent,137-138.
- 133Ibid.
- 134Ibid.,139-140; Gras, 700.
- 135"ORDRE INITIAL D'OPERATION CONCERNANT L'ENGAGEMENT DU 26me R.E.P. A KOLWEZI PAR O.A.P. LE 19 MAI 78, Kinshasa, Zaire, le 19 mai 1978 (0400A); Gras,700.
- 136ORDRE.
- 137Ibid.
- 138Ibid.
- 139Ibid.
- 140Ibid.; Erulin, "Kolwezi".
- 141Sergent, 118-119.
- 142Ibid.,140-144; Gras,700; MMF; Erulin, "BONITE".

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143Sergent, 142-146; Gras,700; MMF; Erulin, "BONITE".

144Sergent, 148-150; Hatte,26-27; Paul Fanshaw, "TARGET KOLWEZI", SOLDIER OF FORTUNE, December 1983, 51-52.

145Sergent,152-153;Fanshaw, 52; Hatte, 27; Erulin, "BONITE"; Erulin, "Kolwezi".

146Sergent, 155-157.

147Ibid., 157-158; Fanshaw,52-54; MMF.

148Sergent, 159-160.

149Ibid.

150Ibid., 160-161.

151ORDRE; Legum, ACR77-78, B576.

152Sergent, 163-164.

153Ibid.,164-168.

154Ibid.,169-172.

155Ibid.,173-177.

156Ibid.; Gras,701; Erulin, "BONITE", MMF.

157Sergent,169,181-182; Erulin, "BONITE".

158Sergent, 182-184; Erulin, "BONITE".

159Ibid.

160Ibid.

## CHAPTER 6

### EVACUATION : STANLEYVILLE II

Forty minutes flying time to the north of Kolwezi, other European soldiers eagerly waited for dawn on the 20th of May. They were the men of the Belgian Paracommando Regiment and they too, had a mission to perform in the mining center.

Following his meeting with the Belgian crisis cabinet the evening of the 16th, Colonel Depoorter, the regiment commander, had returned to his headquarters to begin planning. Actually, the staff was already ahead of the cabinet in anticipating a larger operation than that conceived under Operation Samaritan. At 170200, the Belgian General Staff confirmed the planning guidance: Depoorter was to plan for a seizure of Kolwezi airport and a humanitarian evacuation operation not to exceed seventy-two hours. Based on an enemy strength of around four thousand rebels, the staff began planning on how best to seize the mining center. Although efforts were still ongoing to secure French cooperation, Depoorter's instructions did not mention the possibility of French assistance. While he went to yet another cabinet meeting that morning, the regimental staff continued its preparations, and by 1500 the plan for Operation Red Bean was ready.<sup>161</sup>

Red Bean called for two reinforced battalions of the regiment to conduct simultaneous airborne operations to seize the airfield and the city the morning of the 20th. The 3rd Para Battalion, commanded by Major BEM

G. Couwenberg, was to take the flying club strip north of the city and move immediately to secure the expatriates. Couwenberg understood the need for speed; as a student in the Belgian Staff College, he had written a paper on the Dragon operations. Along with its headquarters company, the battalion was to have three rifle companies: the 15th and the 17th from 3rd Para, and the 14th from the 2nd Commando Battalion. Meanwhile, the 1st Para Battalion, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel R. Verbeke, was to jump on the main airstrip south of the city. Veteran of Dragon Rouge, 1st Para was to take its headquarters company, the 11th, 13th, and the 21st Companies. Using eighteen radio jeeps, ten armored jeeps from the Reconnaissance Squadron, and twenty-six of the three wheeled AS24s, the regiment was to have 1,180 men for the operation. In addition to its normal medical complement, the regiment was also taking an airborne qualified surgical team. The regiment would also receive a light aviation detachment with an Alouette helicopter to facilitate control. To move the Paracommandos, the 15th Wing was going to employ ten C130s and ten Boeing 727s (eight from Sabena) and the United States Air Force was to fly 120 tons of fuel per day into Kamina. While seven of the C130s were immediately available, three would have to join the airlift at Kamina from a food relief mission in Mali.<sup>162</sup>

Clearly, the Belgian Paracommandos approached the rescue operation as a serious military undertaking. Many of the plan's fundamentals were directly related to the unit's experiences in 1964. Of particular importance to the planners was that the regiment have sufficient strength to take the town and the airstrip at the same time. In executing Dragon Rouge, the Paracommandos had been delayed in seizing the city of Stanleyville, and the Simba rebels had slaughtered many of their hostages moments before the

Belgians could save them. The need for trauma medical care was equally important to the operation as also proved in the 1964 operations. Hence the inclusion of the mobile surgical hospital. Finally, the regiment was taking its organic transport to allow it to operate outside the city in motorized patrols as it had done in Dragon Noir, the rescue at Paulis in 1964.<sup>163</sup>

Aside from the military lessons learned from 1964, it was equally apparent that Belgium's political leaders had learned a fundamental lesson. That came through in the Defense Minister's guidance to Depoorter as the regimental commander departed at 1900 with the tentative decision to execute Red Bean. Depoorter was to execute a humanitarian evacuation operation, taking all measures to protect the expatriates and rescuing any hostages short of crossing any international borders. Mr. Vanden Boeynants prohibited Depoorter from participating in the French operation in any way, classifying it as a military action divorced from the Belgian evacuation. Depoorter's orders emphasized speed of execution: he had but seventy-two hours to evacuate all refugees who wished to leave. The Belgian government did not intend to abandon any expatriates in Kolwezi as it had done in the hasty withdrawal from the Congo in 1964, nor did it intend to get drawn into a security operation with the French that might backfire on Belgians in other locations in Zaire. So as Colonel Depoorter departed for his headquarters, he understood clearly the political constraints surrounding his mission.<sup>164</sup>

With the conditional "go" in his pocket, Depoorter put out the formal alert order at 172020 May for a 1300 departure the following day. The Paracommando Regiment readied for deployment. Major André Patte, a veteran of Dragon Rouge and Depoorter's intelligence officer, had managed to develop more information on the situation courtesy of a Mr. Lauwers, a

GECAMINES employee specially flown in from Zaire. Even with Lauwers' help, Patte still lacked sufficient maps to equip the Regiment. By this time most of the units involved were already preparing for movement. Since the decision to execute was not an absolute, the men of the regiment were not confined to their camps, but were released to go home as soon as their preparations were completed. 165

At 1000 the next day, Depoorter and his staff met with the representatives of Sabena and the 15th Wing. The officers agreed that the C130s would deploy first with equipment and parachutes to Kamina. The military and Sabena jets would then move the regiment's personnel. By doing so, the men would remain fresh and rested for the operation on the 20th. To the Paracommandos chagrin, however, Sabena insisted on using the international airport at Melsbroek rather than Kleine-Brogel. The civilian airlines furthered confusion by continuously changing the number of aircraft available. Overflight clearances were also a problem; unlike France, Belgium had to negotiate clearances with the countries along the route. Madiera-Abidjan-Libreville-Kamina. By C130 the trip would require twenty-five hours or eighteen hours by 727, but it was the most direct route open to the Belgians. 166

Even as the men worked, the government announced the alert to the general public--to the great consternation of the Paracommandos. As the unit moved to the airport, the Regiment was swamped with civilians. The scene at Melsbroek was in the words of one of the Paras something out of a circus. News media coverage of the deployment had succeeded in attracting a large crowd out at the airport to watch the regiment take off. Families came out to wave farewell and the troops lined up for a hurried series of



vaccinations. Each 727 was packed with 180 troopers along with their rucksacks and weapons. Even with all the delays the unit was soon loaded, though it was a far cry from the quiet deployment of 1964. That afternoon the Paracommando Regiment began another journey to Zaire.<sup>167</sup>

At 1315 the first C130 lifted off with Colonel Blume at the controls. On board were Colonel Depoorter and his principal staff. The Belgians were going without air clearance from the French. It was not until the third C130 took off that France granted overflight clearance to the Belgians. Nevertheless it was a remarkable performance by the Paras and the flight crews as less than thirty hours from the initial warning order, the Regiment's lead elements were airborne, headed for Africa. That evening the remainder of the unit, on board the 727s, followed.<sup>168</sup>

After a long and tiresome flight, the first Belgian 727 landed at Kamina at 191400 May. Greeted by Commandant De Keyser of the regiment's advance party, the Paras were off-loading as Depoorter's C130 set down. In single arrivals, the Regiment continued to close at the airfield until less than thirty-six hours after its departure, the Paracommando Regiment had arrived fully equipped in Zaire.<sup>169</sup>

Upon landing, Depoorter wasted little time. While the men off-loaded equipment and prepared for the next day's operation, the regimental commander studied the situation in the light of a dramatically altered situation. Depoorter had known that the 311th Airborne Battalion reportedly held the Kolwezi airport, but he had not received any information on the status of the city or the expatriates since departing Belgium. But, he and his staff were absolutely astounded to learn the French were going to attempt taking the town using four to six aircraft that afternoon. Depoorter

feared the French would be unable to secure the city before dark, leaving part if not all of the expatriates at the rebels' mercy. After learning of the French plan, he radioed Brussels and asked for permission to conduct a reconnaissance-in-force into the airfield before dark to reinforce the 2nd R.E.P. Although Brussels' reply to the hasty operation was negative, the government did issue the final clearance for the operation on the 20th.<sup>170</sup>

With Brussels' final decision in hand, Depoorter modified his planning to meet the new circumstances in Kolwezi. Since the 311th held the airfield and the French would already be in the town, Depoorter decided to abandon the original plan to parachute on the two drop zones. Instead, he would conduct an assault landing using the C130s of Colonel Blume's 15th Wing. The two commanders had worked together many times perfecting the technique, and they soon had a workable plan.<sup>171</sup>

At 2200, Colonel Depoorter briefed the new plan for Operation Red Bean. Using eight C130s, the Paracommando Regiment would conduct an air assault landing on Kolwezi airfield in three waves. The first wave was to consist of the regimental tactical command post, and elements of the 1st and 3rd Para Battalions. The 1st Para Battalion was to secure the airfield while the 3rd Para Battalion moved along the railroad into the old town. As soon as the first wave was out of the C130s, the aircraft would return to Kamina for the next wave. Along with the remainder of the 1st and 3rd Para Battalions, the second wave was to bring in the Reconnaissance Squadron as the regimental reserve. This would free the 1st Para Battalion to move on the new town. A third cycle of the assault was to bring in the Regiment's vehicles and the mobile surgical hospital. Immediately upon arrival at the airfield, the Regiment was to set up a reception center for the refugees.<sup>172</sup>

Depoorter's plan capitalized on the new circumstances of the situation. By conducting an air assault on the airfield, he could have five hundred Paras on the ground and assembled in minutes. The march into the city could almost be made in the time needed to assemble after an airborne operation. Without more detail on the French operation, Depoorter did not dare drop his men on a drop zone closer to the city--and his orders forbade any such direct coordination with the French should he be able to contact them. With his full complement of vehicles due in by the third wave, Depoorter could expect to be fully mobile by mid-morning. This would allow the Regiment to mount patrols outside the confines of the city, a capacity sorely missed by the 2nd R.E.P. After preparing for the mission, the Paracommando Regiment bedded down for a short evening. The men were confident; in the words of Captain Wittemans, the "... men were very calm. Some of them had been at Stanleyville and Paulis. They served as a model for the others." Wittemans spoke from experience: he, too, was a veteran of Dragon Rouge.<sup>173</sup>

The veterans of the airbrne assault on the 19th were equally calm. As dawn broke on the 20th, the members of the 2nd R.E.P. prepared for the second day of operations. Colonel Erulin issued orders to his units: the 1st Company was to move to the south along the route to Kapata; the 2nd Company was to expand its positions to include more of the western half of the old town; and the 3rd Company received instructions to clear Manika. While the 1st and 2nd Companies had little contact with the rebels, the 3rd Company was once more in a bitter fight with the FNLC.<sup>174</sup>

Captain Gausseres decided to take Manika in a pincer movement. The 1st Section under Lieutenant Bourgain was to move directly south into the

quarter from its night position. Captain Gausseres with the rest of the 3rd Company was going to move east of the quarter and penetrate Manika from the flank to link up with Bourgain. Erulin had stressed speed in clearing the area and searching for hostages, and Gausseres hoped to catch the FNLC off guard. The company commander realized that the rebels' local militia, after retreating into Manika the previous day, had had ample opportunity to prepare its defenses.<sup>175</sup>

Lieutenant Bourgain's platoon moved off first. Easing along Avenue Okito, the 1st Section moved in bounds through the native quarter. In contrast with the European quarters of Kolwezi, Manika's streets were narrow and crooked, offering excellent ambush positions to a defender. The rebels used the area to their advantage; less than 100 meters into the town, the Legionnaires began receiving fire. The shooting grew in intensity, and no matter how the lieutenant maneuvered his men they made little progress. After an advance of a couple of hundred meters, the 1st Section stopped and assumed defensive positions. Bourgain radioed his company commander.<sup>176</sup>

Though not happy with 1st Section's progress, Captain Gausseres could not complain too loudly. He was having his own problems just getting close to the native quarter. After moving off along the north side of the town at 0500, Gausseres had attempted to reach the railroad east of Manika. His unit drew rebel fire almost immediately. Though generally inaccurate, the rebel fire did force the Legionnaires to move slowly and cautiously. The 3rd Company did not reach the eastern entrance to the village until almost 0700. Halted 250 meters outside the town, Gausseres searched for a means of routing the rebels who seemed perfectly willing to slug it out with the French. He had just decided to take the Protestant church on the outskirts of

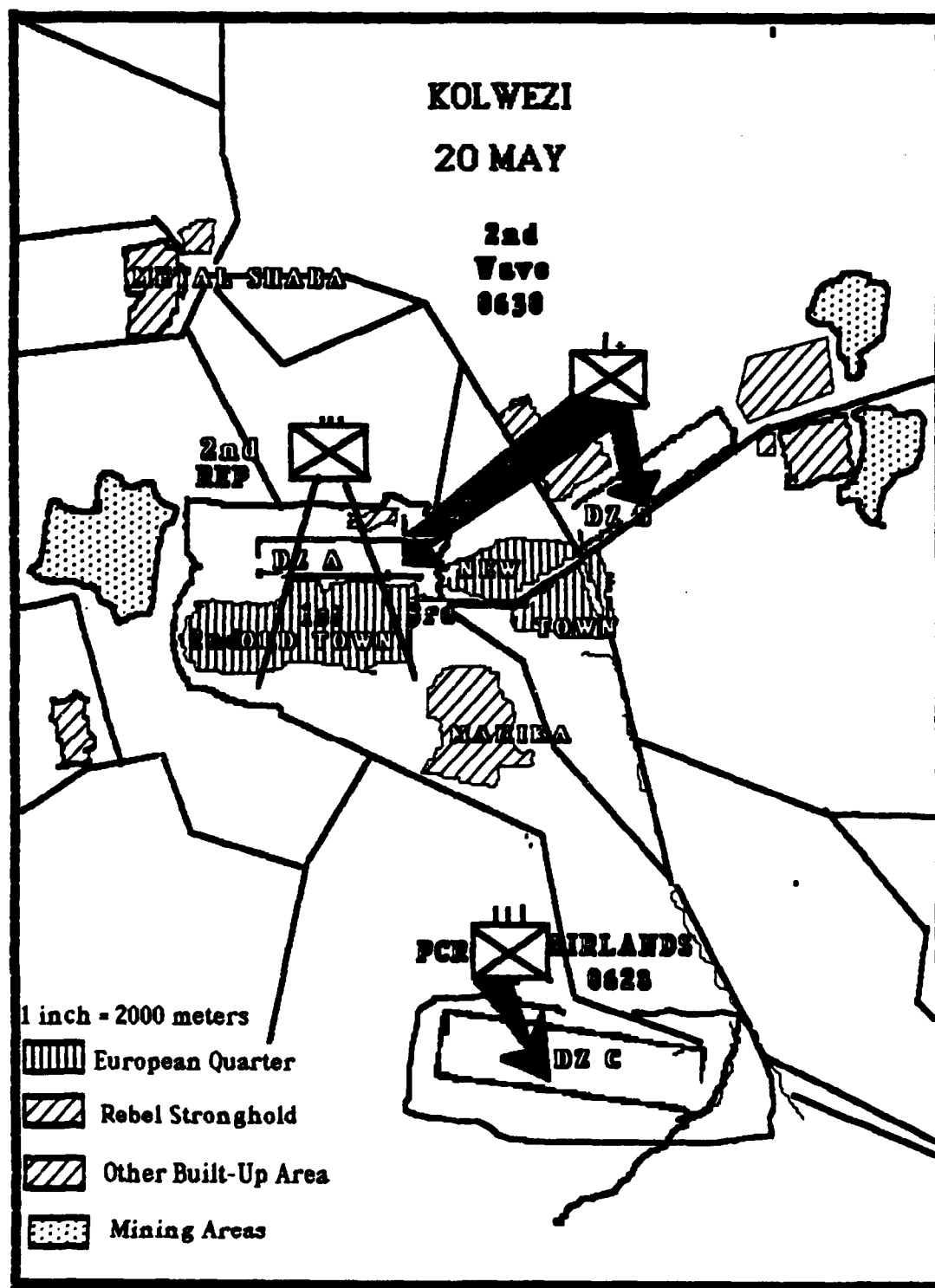
Manika when one of his men asked him to identify some troops approaching their rear. Turning to see, Gausseres swore, "*Merde. Voila, les Belges!*"<sup>177</sup>

After a 0400 wake up, the Belgian Paracommandos had quickly completed last minute preparations for the day's mission. The first wave of eight C130s took off at 0550 for Kolwezi. With Colonels Depoorter and Blume on board, the first C130 led the formation in a low level flight to the target. The first wave's initial flight of four C130s with the 1st Para Battalion's lead elements swung in toward the target at 0628. Shuddering under the drag of full flaps, the C130s slammed onto the runway, their rear ramps already lowering for the Paras. Quickly, the men ran from the aircraft, the C130s took off, and the next four C130s swarmed in to repeat the operation. In minutes, the Belgians had five hundred men on the ground.<sup>178</sup>

For the Paracommando Regiment, things were a bit confused initially. Briefed that the 311th Airborne Battalion had control of the field, the Belgians were at first taken aback by the number of black soldiers present-- and by the variety of uniforms that made identification difficult. A less disciplined unit might have opened fire and asked questions later, but the Paras restrained their nervous fingers. Lieutenant Colonel Kesteloot, the Regiment's deputy, sought out Major Mahele, the FAZ commander, and coordinated the field's defenses. Meanwhile, Depoorter ordered the 3rd Para Battalion to move into the old town. Even as Major Couwenberg led his unit toward the city, the Belgians saw parachutes blossom northeast of Kolwezi.<sup>179</sup>

Following an uncomfortable evening waiting on the tarmac at Lubumbashi, the 2nd R.E.P.'s second assault wave had boarded its aircraft shortly before dawn for the morning's jump. On board, Captain Grail's 4th

Company was to jump on drop zone 'B' and hit the new town from the rear. Meanwhile the R.E.P.'s reconnaissance section, mortar platoon, and main command post element were to jump on drop zone 'A'. The reconnaissance



section was to move on Camp Forrest and the old Gendarmerie camp north of the city, and the mortars were to establish firing positions on the drop zone to support the R.E.P.'s operations.<sup>180</sup>

The drop went as planned; the 4th Company assembled quickly. Captain Grail sent one section along his left flank to secure the FAZ command post. Another section moved to the right to take the Baron-Leveque building. Grail moved with that section and discovered the slaughter house missed by Gausseres the previous evening. Grail had just finished calling in the grim news when his men discovered Miss Radu, alive under the pile of bodies. Minutes later the nearly starved Jurmann and Michel appeared from their hiding place in the ceiling, grateful for their apparent salvation. As the 4th Company secured the new town, the reconnaissance section took the police camp and Camp Forrest without trouble.<sup>181</sup>

Flying overhead in his C160 command post, Colonel Gras was pleased so far with the morning's events. But his satisfaction turned to concern as he watched the Belgians conduct their assault on the airfield. When he saw the lead Belgian units head north to the town, he recognized a dangerous situation was developing. With the arrival of his second wave, Colonel Depoorter had sent the 1st Para Battalion toward the new town. The entire Paracommando Regiment was marching toward Kolwezi. Gras flew over the field and attempted to stop the movement before the Belgians blundered into French positions. Gras was too late.<sup>182</sup>

Shortly after Captain Gausseres of the 2nd R.E.P.'s 3rd Company had spotted the approaching Belgians, he had met the lead unit's commander. Captain De Wulf, 17th Company, 3rd Para Battalion, was an old acquaintance

of Gausseres. The two talked over their missions: De Wulf was there to evacuate the expatriates; Gausseres was attempting to expel the rebels from Manika. The two missions were completely different. Still the two comrades parted amicably, each wishing the other success in their operations.<sup>183</sup>

The friendly atmosphere was short-lived. As the Belgians moved off and Gausseres returned his attention to Manika, firing broke out between the two European forces. Both sides had been under sporadic rebel fire and neither knew the exact dispositions of the other. Each claim it was the other that began the shooting. Fortunately, the firing was inaccurate as leaders on either side brought their men under control before anyone got hurt. Aside from a residual mutual suspicion of each other's intent in the affair-- a suspicion that still exists-- the brief exchange of fire produced no casualties.<sup>184</sup>

Actually the near case of amicide had positive effects on the remainder of the operation. With the failure of his attempt to halt via radio the Belgian movement into the city, Gras had his C160 land on the airport. In his face to face with the Belgians, Gras attempted to get Depoorter to halt the Belgian operation, a demand that Depoorter naturally refused. The differences in the two missions were apparent to both. Gras was in charge of an operation to drive the rebels from the city; Depoorter was there to evacuate the foreign population. The Belgians did not care what happened to Kolwezi or Zaire once the operation was over just as long as they did not leave anyone behind. Depoorter had only seventy-two hours to complete his operation and he was ill-disposed to consider Gras' objections. Recognizing the futility of trying to change the Belgians' mission, Gras agreed to turn over the majority of the new and old towns to the Paracommando Regiment,

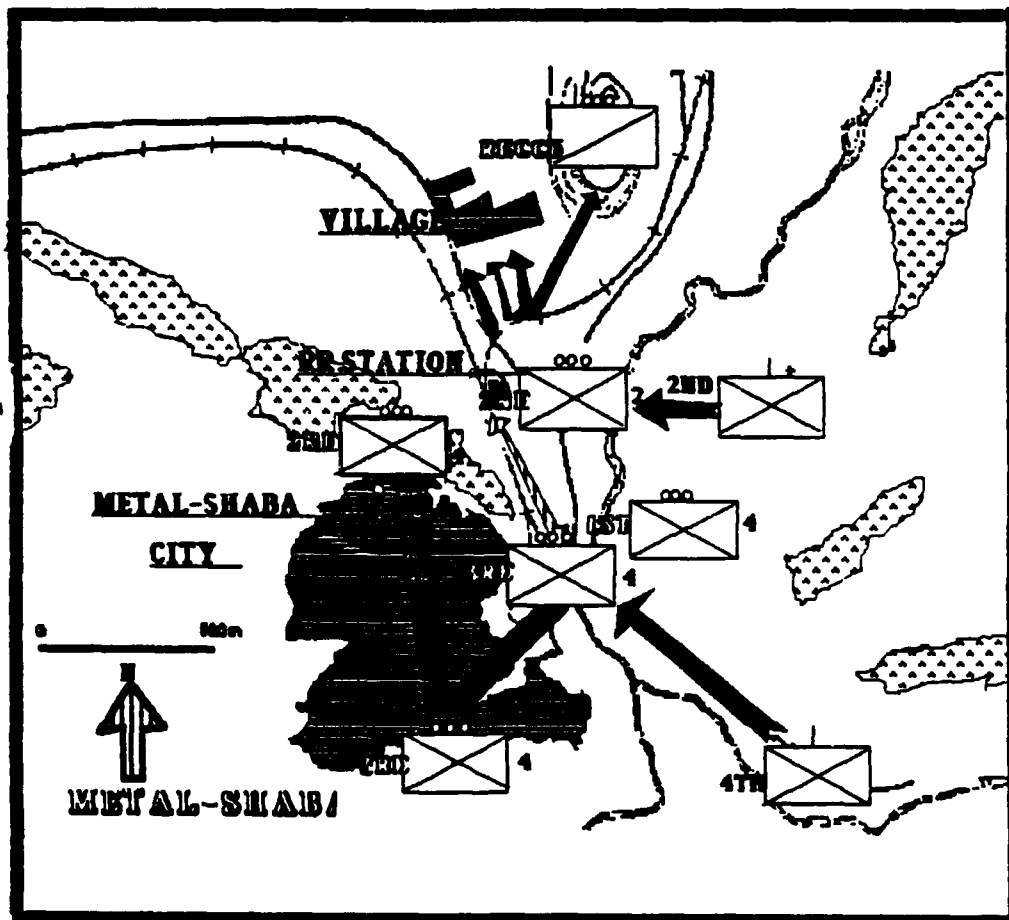


leaving the central area of the city around the rail station and Manika to the 2nd R.E.P. While the Belgians completed their evacuation with the assistance of the FAZ and French airlift to bolster the 15th Wing, the 2nd R.E.P. would continue to search the outlying districts for expatriates and rebels. At 0930, Depoorter reconfirmed the agreement with Colonel Erulin in the Hotel Impala.<sup>185</sup>

Though less than an ideal arrangement, the agreement was the first and only coordination between the two forces. Minimally, it stopped the Belgians and the French from shooting at one another. It also provided the 2nd R.E.P. with needed medical support from the Paracommandos surgical team. The French in turn placed their airlift at the disposal of the Belgian evacuation effort. That is not to say that relations between the two European neighbors were particularly cordial for the remainder of the operation. Gras and Erulin still did not like the Belgians' emphasis on a speedy evacuation of the expatriates. Gras felt the Belgians' haste set off a panic flight among the foreign population that was unnecessary. Some of the French accused the Belgians of forcing the expatriates to leave. The Belgians felt the 2nd R.E.P. was rather cavalier in its use of force against the locals. Leaders of the Belgians reported the French attempted to interfere with the Belgian operation. Both sides only grudgingly cooperated in coordinating their actions in mounting patrols outside the city. Still, there was no further exchange of fire among the 'friendly' forces in Kolwezi.<sup>186</sup>

In any case, the arrival of the Paracommando Regiment had not halted the activities of the 2nd R.E.P. in clearing the city. After the exchange of fire between his 3rd Company, 2nd R.E.P. and the 3rd Para Battalion, Captain Gausseres finally succeeded in reaching Lieutenant Bourgain's position.

Gausseres finally succeeded in reaching Lieutenant Bourgain's position. After a two hour fight to move the nine hundred meters to the 1st Section's location, Gausseres eased his company out of Manika, leaving it to be cleared later. That afternoon the 2nd R.E.P. got into the most serious fight of the operation when Erulin ordered the 4th Company to scout out the rail station at a village north of the town known as Metal-Shaba. Captain Grail began the march at 1530 with his 3rd Section in the lead. As the company closed on the objective, Grail ordered the 2nd Section forward to check out the village. Meanwhile, Sergeant-Chef Cas of the 3rd Section had climbed the station tower and reported spotting around a hundred uniformed soldiers to the company's front.<sup>187</sup>



Grail had just refused Cas permission to open fire when the possible 'FAZ paras' opened fire on the 3rd Section. Grail soon found his company engaged by a heavy machine gun and two hundred to three hundred rebels. The 4th Company responded like veterans. Seeing the 3rd Section under fire, the 2nd Section set up a base of fire along a ridge northwest of its comrades. The 2nd Section's snipers played havoc with the rebel machine gunners, killing them one by one as the FNLC attempted to man the gun. Still it was not a one way battle; rebel fire raked the 4th Company's positions killing Sergeant-Chef Daniels and wounding Corporal Prudence. Grail saw that he would need help to clean out the area. After drawing back into a more defensible posture, Captain Grail radioed Erulin and asked for reinforcements.<sup>188</sup>

Erulin responded immediately by ordering the 2nd Company of Captain Dubos to move to the village. 'Bobosse' soon had his unit moving, mounted on Magirus trucks borrowed from the GECAMINES motor pool. With a Dutch mechanic who did not speak a word of French--he was known as 'GODVERDOMME' by the Legionnaires due to his enthusiastic swearing-- to guide it, the 2nd Company arrived at Metal-Shaba very quickly. Erulin's operations officer, Captain Coeveot took command of the fight and directed the coordinated fire of the two companies, and the newly arrived reconnaissance and mortar sections. The rebels broke under the assault and fled, harassed by a FAZ Mirage. Afterwards the French found the FNLC had left nearly eighty dead behind. Aside from scattered firing during the evening, the fight at Metal-Shaba ended the fighting around Kolwezi on the 20th.<sup>189</sup>

As the French concentrated on eliminating rebel pockets of resistance, the Paracommando Regiment focused on removing the foreign population from danger. By the morning of the 20th at least sixty expatriate bodies had been found. By the time the evacuation was complete, some 160 expatriates and several hundred natives were known to be dead. The city itself was almost dead, out of water, no electricity, and no food. Most of the survivors were more than willing to leave Kolwezi. Once the Belgians penetrated the city, the foreigners began gathering to depart. Many were in need of medical care. Some had seen their family killed in front of them. A fortunate few were reunited with loved ones who had been missing for several days. In any case, very few asked to stay. One who demanded of the Paras if the evacuation was mandatory received the reply, "Of course not! But, we won't be coming back next week either." The individual joined the refugees headed to the airport.<sup>190</sup>

At the airfield, the airflow was moving the refugees out very quickly. By 1230, some five hundred expatriates had departed for Kamina where the Belgians had established an intermediate processing center. Around midday a Royal Air Force VC10 flying hospital arrived from the United Kingdom via Lusaka, Zambia. An Italian C130 flew in with additional spares for the 15th Wing as Italy's contribution to the evacuation. The United States Air Force's C141s continued to ferry fuel and supplies into Kamina and Lubumbashi to keep the operation going. That afternoon President Mobutu flew in to compliment the French and Belgians on the operation. Taken to visit the massacre site in the new town, the shocked dictator gasped, "Mon Dieu, they have smashed their heads in." He soon departed for Kinshasa. At dusk, the Belgians rounded up abandoned vehicles and lined the runways with them,

using their headlights to illuminate the field. By the end of operations on the 20th, the 15th Wing and others had flown eleven hundred Paras into Kolwezi and evacuated some two thousand expatriates. They continued the operation the following day.<sup>191</sup>

After the drama of the 19th and the 20th, May 21st proved almost anticlimactic for the Paracommando Regiment. The Belgians dispatched motorized patrols in company strength to areas as far as forty kilometers away. One patrol did make visual contact with rebels fleeing toward the border but no shots were exchanged. The Belgian Ambassador, Mr. Rittweger de Moor, flew in from Kinshasa and toured the area with Depoorter and Blume. Significantly, the ambassador suggested that some of the Paras might stay behind once the withdrawal began. Mobutu paid yet another visit to the city that afternoon, stopping briefly to see the Paracommandos. By late afternoon, Depoorter was able to report that Operation Red Bean was virtually over.<sup>192</sup>

In Kolwezi, the situation was virtually the same for the 2nd R.E.P. That morning the French Ambassador, Mr. Ross, had visited the city and toured it with Colonels Gras and Erulin. Ross also brought word that the French might be required to extend their stay in Shaba as the rapid flight of the expatriates from Kolwezi had spread panic throughout the province. The R.E.P. had continued to concentrate on cleaning out Manika where it was believed the rebels had once again left stay behind supporters along with weapons and ammunition. That day the unit's vehicles had driven in from Lubumbashi where they had arrived via American airlift. More good news came in with the return of the R.E.P.'s anti-tank gunners, missing since the drop on the 19th. During Mobutu's visit at 1600, the Zairian instructed

Colonel Gras that he was to assume command of all friendly forces in Kolwezi, a decision hardly palatable to the Belgians. Nevertheless, the French were able to report at the end of the day that rebel activity around Kolwezi had ceased.<sup>193</sup>

With the arrival of its vehicles, the 2nd R.E.P. prepared to expand its operations outside the city. After debriefing refugees, the next day Erulin began a series of motorized patrols to cut off rebel escape routes. Rumors were rampant that the FNLC had withdrawn with up to seventy expatriate hostages, and Erulin still had hopes of saving the French military advisors who had disappeared in the rebels' initial attack. On the 22nd, the R.E.P. mounted an action to Kapata, ten kilometers from Kolwezi. Capturing several rebels and killing four, the Legionnaires failed to find any hostages. Erulin's men carried out similar missions on the 23rd, the 25th, and the 26th, and although these missions succeeded in killing several rebels, they failed to find any more hostages. Nor were they without cost to the 2nd R.E.P., which lost three killed in action after the 21st of May. Nevertheless, the 2nd R.E.P.'s combat in Shaba was over by the 27th when the first company departed for Lubumbashi and its ultimate return to Corsica on 6 June. In eight days, the 2nd R.E.P. had killed around 252 and captured 163 rebels, along with an enormous amount of military hardware. The cost had not been cheap: the 2nd R.E.P. lost five dead and another twenty-five wounded.<sup>194</sup>

Ironically, the Belgian Paracommando Regiment, so reluctantly dispatched to Zaire by Brussels, was on hand to witness the French departure. On 22 May, following the end of the air evacuation the previous day, the Paracommando Regiment began its withdrawal from Kolwezi. At

0400, word arrived from Brussels ordering Depoorter to pull back to Kamina and the 3rd Para Battalion boarded the aircraft almost immediately. In fifty-five hours in Kolwezi, the Paracommando Regiment had evacuated twenty-three hundred civilians without a single casualty. By 1000, the 3rd Para was closed at Kamina and 1st Para was on its way. At 1325, Depoorter reported the entire unit was at Kamina, prepared to return to Belgium. Unbeknownst to the Paras not all would be going home straight away. At 1800, a message arrived from Brussels congratulating the Regiment on its performance-- and directing Depoorter to leave one battalion behind in Shaba. The next morning at 0400, the 1st Para Battalion and the AT Company watched the rest of the Regiment fly home.<sup>195</sup>

With the current state of uneasiness in Shaba-- especially among the foreign population-- the Belgian government had agreed with Ambassador de Moor's assessment that some form of stabilizing force would be needed. With the FAZ already openly pillaging Kolwezi, it was clear that Zaire's own armed forces were incapable as always. Discussions were already underway in Washington, Paris, and Brussels concerning a return of the Moroccans or some other African security force. What was needed at this stage was an interim security force; the task fell to the Paracommando Regiment. The 1st Para Battalion, reinforced with additional mortars, logistics, medical, and airlift, was to assure the safety of the expatriates in other Shaba towns. Prohibited from assisting the FAZ in any actions, the battalion remained in the country until 25 June when the 3rd Para Battalion returned. Third Para stayed until the arrival of the Inter-African Force in July. Though the Inter-African Force would remain in Zaire for the next few months, the Second Shaba War was over.<sup>196</sup>

Although the war was over, its reverberations were only beginning. For Zaire, the invasion was a blow the staggering Zairian economy could ill-suffer. The attack had shut down the country's mining industry--within a week the world price for cobalt jumped 24 percent. With Zaire already \$3 billion in debt, Mobutu's western supporters quickly raised \$100 million to forestall a total Zairian collapse. Economic measures aside, Mobutu faced other problems. In contrast to the euphoria after Mobutu's 'victory' in the Eighty Days War, the atmosphere in Zaire was almost funereal after the Kolwezi disaster. Once again the FAZ carried out reprisals against the population of Shaba, and the fear of repression spread as far as Kinshasa. This time, however, Mobutu's backers stepped in and forced reform measures on the recalcitrant dictator. If he wanted to continue to receive Western economic aid, he was going to have to take real steps to clean up or at least control the spread of corruption in Zaire's government. Grudgingly, Mobutu complied, even going so far as to release a number of political prisoners jailed in the aftermath of Shaba I.<sup>197</sup>

The other half of the bargain for Western aid for Mobutu was for him to settle his differences with Neto of Angola. When Mobutu made disturbing remarks at the Franco-African Summit at the end of May about American corruption in government, the U.S. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, warned him that he had to cease interfering in Angolan affairs or he would face yet another Shaba invasion. Negotiations between the two African neighbors had begun before the invasion was even over, and had progressed well, producing a Neto promise to disarm the FNLC. Following another round of meetings in Brazzaville, Mobutu and Neto agreed to quit supporting groups hostile to the other's regime. The honeymoon was capped with a visit by



Neto to Kinshasa in August. Still the episode ended with observers wondering how Neto was going to handle the FNLC or Mobutu the tribal hatreds that remained in Shaba. As one Moroccan officer, newly arrived as a member of the Inter-African Force, put it, "I was here last year, I am here now, and I have no doubt that I will be back again next year."<sup>198</sup>

While Mobutu's Western supporters were telling him to get along with his neighbors, they engaged in their own squabbles. The principal dispute was, as might be expected, between France and Belgium. France and d'Estaing in particular had emerged from the crisis with a strong measure of support for the intervention among Europe's news media, especially that of Belgium. In contrast, the Belgium press had been very vocal in criticizing the Tindemans government for its sluggish handling of the affair. In response to that heckling and French remarks about the disclosure of the Paracommandos movement, the Belgian government had accused France of neo-colonialism and of exploiting the crisis for economic gain. Belgian observers referred to the 2nd R.E.P.'s action as another example of "d'Estaing's Africa Corps". Watching from the sidelines and ever hopeful of manipulating the situation to his own ends, Mobutu threatened to replace all Belgian workers with French, a threat Brussels felt sure had originated in Paris. Tindemans, however, managed to bring the tension level down a notch or two with an unscheduled trip to Paris in late May. Meeting with d'Estaing and Mobutu, the three resolved some of the differences brought out by Shaba II.<sup>199</sup>

Across the Atlantic, one of Mobutu's more reluctant allies also struggled with the aftershocks of Shaba II. Following the Carter Administration's decision to alert the 82nd Airborne Division, the news

media had taken note of the message being sent to the Soviets vis-a-vis the crisis in Zaire. Having served notice that it would react to perceived threats in the Third World, the Carter Administration waited until the French intervened and cancelled the 82nd's alert, a step made possible by the Morris-Knudsen evacuation.<sup>200</sup>

Yet White House advisors, concerned over the Administration's poor standing in the press, convinced President Carter to go even further in breaking with the low key response of the previous year. President Carter came out blasting--and promptly shot himself in the foot over the question of Cuban involvement in Shaba II. After the Ford Administration's embarrassment over the Angolan fiasco in 1975-1976, Carter's advisors had treated the 1977 Shaba invasion as a strictly African affair. But things had changed by 1978 with the growing insurgency in Rhodesia, supported by the Soviets and the Red Chinese, and the massive intervention by the Soviets and Cubans in the Ethiopian-Somali conflict. President Carter's advisors had convinced him that he had to draw the line somewhere and that Shaba province was the place to do so. Unfortunately, the President's charges of direct Cuban involvement rang empty when U.S. Congressional leaders asked to see hard evidence to support the accusations. In the end, many observers were more inclined to believe Castro's claims that he had tried to forestall the invasion and had gone so far as to warn the United States that it was coming. Concerned over bolstering his image as a tough international statesman, President Carter had picked the wrong arena and in the end only appeared incompetent to Congress and the news media.<sup>201</sup>

So almost as quickly as it began, the Second Shaba War ended. As in 1964 after the U.S.-Belgian intervention, the reverberations of the crisis had

a greater effect outside the country of Zaire than they did within the Mobutu Regime. Like the crises of 1964 or 1977, the 1978 invasion ended on a note of doubt, doubt that anything lasting or beneficial had taken place. Once again the government in Kinshasa had survived another challenge due largely to external support. And once again, those who had provided the support came away with burned fingers--and the nagging suspicion it would not be the last time Mobutu called for help.

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161 Depoorter, 32; Genot, 264-266; FORUM, 7.

162 Depoorter, 32; Genot, 264-266, 284; FORUM, 5-7, 12-13.

163 Major Henrot, "Des verités bonnes à dire", MONDE, no month, 1978, 48-51.  
Major Henrot, serving in Red Bean as a liaison officer, was the last Belgian officer on the ground in the withdrawal from Paulis. Genot, 284; Odom, 140-144; FORUM, 24.

164 Genot, 266; FORUM, 7-8; Depoorter, 32.

165 Mr. Vanden Boeynants later defended the disclosure as being necessary to let the rebels know that the Paracommandos were coming to conduct an evacuation and thereby to avoid possible misunderstandings. "Commentary", LA LIBRE BELGIQUE, 24 May, 1978; Depoorter, 32; Lieutenant Colonel Malherbe, "Letter to Colonel Depoorter on the subject of Kolwezi", March, 1981.

166 Depoorter, 32; Genot, 266-267; FORUM, 7-10, 12.

167 FORUM, 10-11; Genot, 266-267.

168 Ibid.

169 Genot, 268-269; FORUM, 11-12; Depoorter, 32-33.

170 Depoorter, 32-33; FORUM, 11-13; Genot, 268-269; Major Malherbe, "Nous sommes fiers de nos hommes et de notre operation", UN OFFICIER SUPERIEUR BELGE TEMOIGNE SUR KOLWEZI", article published in Belgian press-exact paper unknown; Malherbe, "Letter"; Henrot, 50.

171 FORUM, 13; Genot, 270.

172 Ibid.; Depoorter, 33.

173 FORUM, 13.

174 Sergent, 187.

175 Ibid., 187-188.

176 Ibid., 188.

177 Ibid., 189.

178 FORUM, 14; Genot, 272; Depoorter, 33.

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179 FORUM, 15-16; Genot, 272; Depoorter, 33.

180 Sergent, 185-186; Hatto, 28-29.

181 Sergent, 185-186. The Belgians claim that their units discovered the slaughter house rather than the French. I do not doubt that the Belgians found the site, but I believe that it was well after the French had found it. The Belgians make no mention of any survivors, a fact that indicates the French had been there ahead of them. In addition, the Belgians report that the unit that found the massacre was attached to the 1st Para Battalion. 1st Para did not move off toward the new town until well after the 2nd R.E.P.'s 4th Company had jumped. FORUM, 17; Genot, 275. Genot does mention a "Mr. Radu" and describes how this individual though wounded had hidden under the bodies and then in a toilet. It seems this is a summary of the experiences of Ms. Radu, Mr. Jurmann, and Mr. Michel.

182 MMF; Genot, 272; FORUM, 16; Sergent, 192; Gras, 701.

183 Sergent, 189-190; Genot, 284.

184 Sergent claims it was the Belgians who opened fire on the 3rd Company. Erulin mentioned it in his after action report, but he did not make any specific accusations. Major Couwenberg, the 3rd Para Battalion commander, claims the French fired on his lead units, a claim supported by Depoorter, Malherbe, and Genot. Colonel Malherbe told me that the French were attempting to intimidate the Paracommando Regiment into stopping the evacuation. I believe it was more likely to have been a natural result of attempting to conduct the operations independently. Sergent, 190-191; Erulin, "BONITE"; Genot, 273; A. Couwenberg, Lieutenant Colonel, 3rd Battalion Para Commando, "Belgians at Kotwezi", "INFANTRY LETTERS", Infantry, July-August 1980, 55; Colonel BEM Malherbe, Commander Belgian Paracommando Regiment, "Conversation with author," Everberg, Belgium, 24 November 1988.

185 MMF; Sergent, 192; Gras, 701; Genot, 272-273; Depoorter, 34; FORUM, 17.

186 MMF; Sergent, 192-193; Gras 701-702; Genot, 273-276; Depoorter, 34; Erulin, "BONITE".

187 Sergent, 191-192, 203; MMF; Gras, 702.

188 Ibid.

189 Sergent, 203-206.

190 MMF; FORUM, 17-18.

191 FORUM, 17-18; Carroll, et al, "Massacre", NEWSWEEK, May 29, 1978, 34-40.

192 Ibid, 24-25; Genot, 276-278; Depoorter, 35; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 05096, DTG. 202137Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: MILITARY SITREP 2030Z

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**193**MMF; Gras,701-702; Hatto, 29; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 05096; Message, AMEMBASSY KINSHASA TO SECSTATE WASHDC, 05090, DTG. 201712Z MAY 78, SHABA ATTACK: MILITARY SITREP; 1110Z 20 MAY.

**194**MMF; Gras,702; Sergeant,211-222; Fanshaw, 110; Erulin, "BONITE".

**195**Depoorter,35; Genot,278; FORUM,30.

**196**Ibid.; Legum, ACR 77-78, B576-B578; Mangold, 111.

**197**Legum, ACR 77-78, B578-B582; Mangold,111-112; "Saving a Country From Itself", TIME, June 19, 1978,34; "U.S. Cobalt Price Jumps", AVIATION WEEK AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY, May 29, 1978, 22.

**198**Legum, ACR 77-78, B579; Mangold, 113-114; "ZAIRE RAIDERS INTENT ON MOBUTU'S OUSTER" NYT, May 24, 1978; James Pringle, "Zaire: Signs of Life" NEWSWEEK, June 19, 1978, 49-50. In fact the FLC made several more appearances in the region during the remainder of 1978 and into 1979. The loyalty of the province's inhabitants, never very strong, dropped even further with the FAZ's actions after the war was over. The Belgian Paracommando Regiment repeated its deployment the following year by sending a battalion to Kitona to comfort expatriate fears of further unrest.

**199**"FRENCH TROOPS LAND IN ZAIRE BATTLE ZONE; U.S. SEES CUBAN ROLE" NYT, May 20, 1978, 1,4; "Belgian-French Rift Over Zaire Reflects Differences in Interests", NYT, May 21, 1978; "Belgians Fear French Intervention in Zaire is to Expand Influence" NYT, May 23, 1978; Ronald Koven, "Zaire, Belgium Settle Differences at Surprise Paris Talks" WP, May 23, 1978, A4.

**200**Mangold,108-111;"Carter Criticizes Hill Restraint on U.S. Role Abroad" NYT, May 17, 1978,A1, A25.

**201**Crawford Young, "Zaire: The Unending Crisis" FOREIGN AFFAIRS, Fall 1978, 181-182; Schmidt, 90; "Saving A Country From Itself" TIME, June 29, 1978,34-35;Mangold,108-109; Carroll,et.al., "Massacre",39; Legum, ACR 77-78, B578; "French Official:Soviet, Cuban Advisors Aiding Zaire Rebels" WP, May 20, 1978, A10; Gras, 712-713; "Turmoil In Africa, Will Carter Act?" U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, May 29, 1978, 17-18; "Castro, Russia's Cat's-Paw" U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, June 12, 1978, 20-23; "Andrew Young, Still the Voice of Dissent" U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, June 12, 1978, 24-25; Joseph Fromm, "Tug of War Over Foreign Policy", U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, June 19, 1978, 37-40; Raymond Carroll, Paul Martin, and Lars-Erik Nelson, "The Africa Korps", NEWSWEEK, June 19, 1978, 44; "Talking Tough to Moscow" TIME, June 19, 1978, 32-33; Angus Deming, Scott Sullivan, Eleanor Clift, and Fred Coleman, "Strong Words For Moscow", NEWSWEEK, June 19, 1978, 41-44;Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Designs on Africa", NEWSWEEK, June 19, 1978, 50. The problem that Carter ran into was one of degree of credibility. The French and to a lesser extent the Belgians had supported Mobutu's

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charges that the Cubans had been involved in the operation. Some had even claimed that the Cubans had been with the FNLC during the operation, a claim never documented. Most observers were willing to accept the Cubans had provided training to the rebels, who after all had fought with the Cubans and the MPLA during the Angolan Civil War. Where the Carter Administration ran into problems was when it seemed to begin equating one form of support with the other without bothering to specify which it was talking about. A skeptical Congress demanded hard evidence before it would support the President in what appeared to be a potential end to Détente. The President was not able to satisfy those who questioned the charges. Later, evidence developed that if any Eastern block advisors had been involved, they were more likely to have been East Germans.

## CHAPTER 7

### OPERATIONAL POST-MORTEM

In looking back at the operations in Kolwezi, it is clear that French and Belgian political differences dictated the separation between their military efforts. Under the guidance of President Giscard d'Estaing, France was pursuing a policy intended to reinforce France's continued interest in the continent of Africa. Though largely a military program designed to bolster the African countries against Soviet-Cuban or other forms of Communism, France's activist policy included economic dimensions as d'Estaing was also intent on expanding France's commercial status on the continent. Though Belgium had given Zaire (the Congo) its independence in 1960, Belgian economic ties to the country had remained strong, so strong in fact that the Belgians tended to regard the former colony as their economic fiefdom. With the French response to the Shaba I crisis and Mobutu's clumsy threats to replace Belgian interests with French, the Belgians were loathe to participate in a combined operation with their European neighbors.

The Belgians were equally reluctant to consider a unilateral intervention in Zaire. Memories of the 1960s were fresh in Belgian minds. More Westerners had died after the 1964 rescues and subsequent withdrawal than before. After Shaba I had turned out to be more of a comic opera than a war, the Belgian cabinet futilely hoped that the rebels would not harm the Westerners captured in Kolwezi. Prime Minister Leo



Tindemans' handling of the crisis reflected this hesitation; forming a special crisis cabinet that excluded opposition parties, the Belgian cabinet attempted indirect negotiations with the FNLC to evacuate the expatriates. An agreement that military action was unavoidable only came after the killings had begun in Kolwezi. Once that decision was reached, the Belgian government retained tight control over the operation.

In contrast, the French considered intervention from the very beginning of the war. Certainly, France had demonstrated a willingness to intervene in conflicts on the continent as shown in Chad, Lebanon, or Djibouti. D'Estaing's stated activist policy demanded such actions in order to remain credible. When the Kolwezi crisis began, d'Estaing did not bother with a crisis cabinet. Instead, he worked with an emergency task force formed from government technicians. Matching this proactive approach, d'Estaing had the indefatigable Colonel Gras in Kinshasa to push for the intervention. Once the French had decided on action, d'Estaing turned the operation over to Gras for execution, a step that would have been inconceivable from the Belgian perspective.

Equally inconceivable was the French cooperation with the Zairian armed forces. After the Shaba I affair, France had moved to the front as Zaire's principal supplier of arms and training. Much of this training was done inside Zaire by French military teams that worked directly with the FAZ units. As in the case of Lieutenant Colonel Ballade's advisors to the 311th Airborne Battalion, the associations became quite close. In planning to retake Kolwezi, Colonel Gras had intended to establish a combined French-Zairian brigade to drive overland from Lubumbashi. Unfortunately, Mobutu had destroyed any chance to conduct the operation as he wasted the FAZ

units that were available. When the French deployed the 2nd R.E.P., the FAZ provided the C130 crews-- unskilled as they were-- and other support never offered the Belgians. French pilots manned FAZ Mirages to fly combat missions against the rebels and the French advisors rejoined the remnants of the 311th. Mobutu capped the cooperative effort by placing all the FAZ troops in Kolwezi under Gras' command. In contrast to the free hand given Gras by Paris, the Belgian government placed tight restrictions on Colonel Depoorter's cooperation with the FAZ even after the Kolwezi operation was over to avoid compromising his mission.

An examination of the two forces' missions captures the fundamental differences between them. France's policy toward Africa was clearly activist; d'Estaing made it plain that France would not brook further Communist adventurism on the continent. Erulin's mission statement was equally activist; he was to restore order in Kolwezi until the Zairian armed forces could assume responsibility for the area. By driving the rebels out of Kolwezi and Shaba, the French felt the Westerners could be saved and the stability of Zaire maintained. On the other hand, Belgium had no intention of getting involved with propping up the shaky Zairian government. The memories of the disastrous Katangan secession, the 1960 intervention, and the recurrence of 1964 were all too strong for Brussels to forget. The Paracommando Regiment returned to Zaire to conduct an operation *du type Stanleyville*. Depoorter's mission was to conduct a humanitarian rescue of the foreign population with the minimum necessary force. That did not mean the Belgians were forbidden to use their weapons; if the situation had required it, the Paras were fully prepared to kill. Depoorter's rules of

engagement allowed him to use force against anyone who attempted to interfere with the safe evacuation of the expatriates--including the French if necessary.

Just as the squabbling between France and Belgium over Zaire caused political problems, it drastically affected the military operations meant to resolve the situation. For a fleeting moment, there had been a chance for a truly combined and coordinated operation to rescue the foreign population in Kolwezi. With the realization of both Paris and Brussels that an intervention was unavoidable, the planners in Kinshasa met to coordinate their operations. The 2nd R.E.P. and the Paracommando Regiment would have conducted a combined airborne operation on the 20th of May. Yet the announcement by Brussels that Belgian and French military forces were on alert to deploy to Zaire ended any hope for further cooperation. Angered and alarmed by the Belgian disclosure, the French government pushed Gras to move up the date of the 2nd R.E.P.'s operation.

Gras' decision to accede to Paris' request to advance the date of Operation Leopard accounted for much of the operation's hasty character. It should be noted that only the French Colonel's foresight in planning the operation before Paris had even made a decision was the only way that the 2nd R.E.P. was able to respond so quickly. As Erulin got off the plane in Kinshasa, the French Military Mission was able to provide him with a nearly completed plan that he was able to use with little change. From that point forward, most of the 2nd R.E.P.'s problems could be attributed to bad luck or as so many love to say, 'the fog of war.'

The French were forced to accept risks in mounting the operation on the 19th. Certainly, Gras had seen the necessity of jumping in close to the

city in order to secure all of it as rapidly as possible. And he had recognized the need for air support to make the operation feasible. He had wanted to get both waves on the ground as rapidly as possible to conduct the operation. After all the 2nd R.E.P. only had some 600 men to fight several thousand rebels. But both Gras and Erulin had grasped that the risk to the expatriates had grown too strong with the announcements in the world news media that the French and the Belgians were going to intervene. As Erulin later explained, "All the initial phase was becoming more and more based on bluff and rapid action: for this reason the order went out to the units to regroup as rapidly as possible to get to their initial objectives without regards to casualties."<sup>202</sup>

The French accepted more than just the risk of friendly casualties. The airborne operation with its unskilled crews, ill-maintained aircraft, and over-loaded troops courted disaster. Jumping in marginal conditions with ill-matched equipment and unfamiliar parachutes, the 2nd R.E.P. suffered remarkably few casualties from the jump, a fortunate circumstance in that Erulin had been forced to mount the operation with inadequate medical support. Furthermore, the Legionnaires began the operation after almost forty-eight hours without sleep and they would continue to operate for another two days before getting any appreciable rest. To meet the challenge, Erulin relied very heavily on the special training and character of his unit.

To understand Gras and Erulin's calm acceptance of the enormous tasks facing the 2nd R.E.P., one need only look at the unit background. By reputation, the French Foreign Legion did not attract those who possessed gentle souls. The 2nd R.E.P. carried on the tradition of the Foreign Legion parachute regiments so active in the Indochina and Algerian wars. It was

the 2nd R.E.P.'s first combat jump since the unit had been destroyed at Dien Bien Phu, a fact that gave the unit a certain élan when it came to facing the tall odds at Kolwezi. Though the 2nd R.E.P. did not go to Kolwezi, as certain Belgian critics say, to conduct, *Un Western*, Erulin's men did have a certain hardness of attitude not often found in peacetime.<sup>203</sup>

Aside from its reputation and morale, the 2nd R.E.P. was an extremely well trained unit. Erulin's men had practiced this type mission on many occasions so the concept was familiar to them. With a high level of training in basic infantry skills, the Legionnaires were able to adapt to the changing situation. After the extremely confused jump on the 19th, the men assembled and took their initial objectives, fighting off attacks that included armored cars. By using night patrols, ambushes, and listening posts, the Legionnaires were able to disrupt rebel activities that first night in Kolwezi. Their specialty training also paid dividends, especially that of sniper training. Coupled with their mission's intent to kill the rebels, the offensive use of the unit's snipers allowed the 2nd R.E.P. to maintain the upper hand against a sometimes determined resistance. So in accepting the risks of this operation, Colonels Gras and Erulin counted heavily on the abilities of the 2nd R.E.P.<sup>204</sup>

Matching the abilities of the 2nd R.E.P., the Belgian Paracommando Regiment was also a unit deserving of the label, 'elite'. Colonel Depoorter's Paras, like the Legionnaires of Erulin, drew certain pride from their unit's history. Unlike the 2nd R.E.P., however, that pride came from their success in past operations, not from a heritage of glorious defeat. The difference is critical in understanding the Belgians approach to the operation. Even in 1964 in the operation in Stanleyville when the Paras were told to consider

all blacks as enemies, the Regiment had been very selective in its use of force against the Simba rebels. During the 1978 operation, the Paracommando Regiment modeled its operation on its experience in Dragon Rouge.

One of the frustrations in studying military history is the feeling that all too often leaders ignore and therefore repeat the mistakes of the past. That does not hold true in the case of the Paracommando Regiment in the 1978 operation to Zaire. First in examining Colonel Depoorter's original concept and the size of the force to be used, it is apparent he intended to seize the city as rapidly as possible, rather than securing the airport as his initial objective. For some reason, French critics of the Belgian operation fail to recognize that Depoorter's original concept was almost the same as that of Gras, with the exception being that the Belgians were taking twice the number of men. Once Depoorter decided to conduct an air assault operation, he did so in the correct belief that his assembly after airlanding would allow for a more rapid penetration of the city than an air drop. Again, the Paras' experience in 1964 had shown that the delay required for assembly after an airborne operation could be fatal for any hostages waiting for rescue.

Other lessons from the past came through in the Belgians' operation in 1978. In 1964 after the operations in the Congo, the Belgians had pushed for the creation of a fully airmobile surgical unit to support such operations where casualties, civilian or military, might be suffered far from any adequate surgical facility. Certain members of the 2nd R.E.P. owed their lives to the inclusion of the Belgian surgical team in the Kolwezi operation, a fact recognized in the French after-action reports. Mobility was another thread woven from the experience of 1964 when the Paras had relied

heavily on the availability of abandoned cars to mount their operations. In 1978, the Regiment took its organic transport to Kolwezi and was able from the first day of its operations to dispatch patrols outside the city. Again, the French reports, noting that the 2nd R.E.P.'s reliance on confiscated transport had served as an interim measure, bemoaned the need for organic transport in their operation.

In contrast, however, it should be noted that the Belgian political leaders failed to grasp a major lesson of 1964: that it is impossible to conduct such an operation on top of another military operation without effective coordination. The Belgian Defense Minister's orders to Colonel Depoorter to avoid all contact with the French were absolutely absurd. In 1964 a similar situation had developed with the coordination between the Paracommando Regiment and the ground column under Colonel Vandewalle. Then as in 1978 the Paras were conducting a humanitarian rescue and the Vandewalle column was on a mission to restore government control. In order to avoid conflict between the two elements, both Belgian-led, coordination prior to the operation and after the arrival of Vandewalle's force had proved necessary. The same need was present in 1978, and the failure to coordinate the two operations ended in a near disastrous firefight between the Belgians and the French. Just as it had been in 1964, the reluctance to conduct the required liaison in 1978 was due to political restrictions that were not fully thought out.

Apart from the operational lessons as discussed above, certain other fundamentals can be drawn from the interventions in 1978. One should be that a crisis can develop rapidly in the Third World beyond the normal intelligence focus of Western countries. Zaire, so often the scene of previous

eruptions of violence, still caught Western intelligence agencies flat footed. In contrast to 1964 when the United States and Belgium spent months sifting and agonizing over the available information, the situation in Kolwezi occurred rapidly, leaving little time for pondering. Even the need for maps may prove to be a problem and in a fast moving situation like Kolwezi there may not be time to request them or aerial photography. The other side of the issue was that in today's world there are no poorly armed insurgents. In 1978, the FNLC had modern weapons including armored cars; the French found out the rebels knew how to use them. It is not a question of arms as modern arms are readily available on the world market, but a question of training. Modern reaction forces such as light infantry have to be prepared to deal with determined, well-trained foes. Furthermore, intelligence officers have to be careful in assessing probable reactions of insurgent forces such as the FNLC. One can not assume, as did Brussels in this case, that such a force will adhere to international conventions. Today, it is safer to assume the opposite. The same holds true in assessing military capabilities; when is a battalion a battalion?<sup>205</sup>

Reacting to a hostage or evacuation situation places special demands on units. First the situations occur rapidly, generally without warning. Units tasked with such missions have little time to prepare and no time to train for the mission. Very often, such missions may require that hostages be rescued at the same time other refugees are being evacuated. Consequently, special units charged with a hostage rescue may be required to coordinate their operations with more conventional forces conducting the evacuation. One hopes that such cooperation will have been rehearsed in training. Once an alert goes out, there is little time for practice; it is truly a 'come as you are'



**environment. Such operations demand special communications as the Paracommando Regiment used that allowed them to talk directly to their national authorities. Since by their very nature, these missions are heavily political, liaison with the diplomatic mission in the country and with the news media is mandatory. Though the Belgians had adequate measures prepared along these lines, the French did not. As Erulin reported afterward, his staff was almost overwhelmed with the need to coordinate diplomatic and press functions. All of these requirements dictate that units that face such contingency missions train to conduct them--as the Paracommando Regiment has done.**<sup>206</sup>

Tied to the ability to fight rebels such as the FNLC of 1978 is the ability to deploy forces to the combat zone. Very often the logistic requirements of even light infantry such as the 2nd R.E.P. and the Paracommando Regiment are underestimated by those who superficially examine potential operations in places like Zaire. The Belgians, after the experience of 1964, had developed austere area logistic packages to support any further operations along similar lines; the French in their after-action reports noted that such logistic packages would have served well in Kolwezi. To deploy and support the Belgian Paracommando Regiment, the 15th Wing flew thirty-two round trip and 426 local C130 missions--1726 hours of flying time. In a sixty hour period covering the 19th to the 21st, the Belgian crews flew forty-three C130 and fourteen Boeing 727 missions, with some of the crews logging thirty hours of flight time. With an additional 210 flying hours on its Boeing 727s, the 15th Wing still needed the assistance of Sabena with ten airliners and the United States Air Force with eight C141s to complete its operations--support not included in the above totals. Aside

from airframes and crews, the 15th Wing also needed austere base maintenance packages to keep their operation going. During the course of their operations at Kamina, the Wing's mechanics completed four engine changes at the central African base and another five back in Belgium. The same staggering requirements proved necessary to support the 2nd R.E.P. Even using the five FAZ C130s and three French C160s in Zaire, the 2nd R.E.P. required five airliners and two additional C160s to deploy the men of the unit. For transport of their supplies and equipment, the French needed twenty C141s and one C5. All of this airlift was needed to deploy some two thousand 'light infantry' to Zaire to evacuate twenty-three hundred expatriates to Europe.<sup>207</sup>

In conclusion, the operations to retake Kolwezi in 1978 should not be dismissed as something unusual or unlikely to reoccur. Nor should they be discounted as European operations of little interest to American planners. Even though the United States did not commit ground troops to the operation, the 82nd had some two thousand paratroops on alert at one stage of the crisis. In the months following Kolwezi, American troops would find themselves on alert for rescue/evacuation operations in Iran, followed by the disaster at Desert One. Since those operations, U.S. forces have been committed to similar operations in Lebanon, Grenada, and Sudan. Without doubt, U.S. forces will conduct further ventures.

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202 Erulin, "BONITE".

203 Lieutenant Colonel BEM P. Malherbe, "Letter to Général Depoorter Concerning Kolwezi", March 1981.

204 Erulin, "Mission Accomplie", 15.

205 Hatte, 29.

206 Erulin, "BONITE".

207 "NATO Airlift Deficiencies Seen in Zaire Evacuation", AVIATION WEEK & SPACETECHNOLOGY, May 29, 1978, 22; Erulin, "BONITE"; FORUM, 12-13.

**APPENDIX A**

## PERSONALITIES

### Zairian Personalities

**General Babia**

FAZ Chief of Staff in 1978; he had the situation under control.

**Patrice Lumumba**

First Prime Minister of the Congo; his flamboyance in office helped set off the violence of the early 1960s in the Congo; he died while a captive of Tshombe; a martyr, Lumumba became a rallying point for all with a grudge against the central government.

**Major Mahele**

Commanding Officer of the 311th Airborne Battalion; he had the dubious honor of selecting one of his companies as a sacrifice to Mobutu's ego; his performance in reaching Kolwezi was outstanding.

**General Nathaniel Mbumba**

One time police chief of Katanga Province; after Mobutu's revenge against the Lunda and the ex-Gendarmes in Katanga following the 1967 Revolt, Mbumba crossed into Angola and became the military head of the FNLC.

**President Mobutu Sese Seko**

'President' of Zaire since seizing power in 1965; corrupt and difficult to

deal with as the leader of Africa's potentially wealthiest country, he is responsible for Zaire's miserable economic status; as the self-styled leader of Zaire's armed forces, he has rewarded success with exile or worse; also known as 'Le Guide' or 'Citoyen'; formerly known as Joseph Mobutu before Zairianizing his name.

**Joseph Kasavubu**

Ineffective President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1960-1965.

**Moise Tshombe**

Former 'President' of the Katangan Secession against the Congo's central government; responsible for the formation of the Katanga Gendarmerie; after a year's exile, he returned in 1964, to become Prime Minister to defeat the Simba Rebellion; returned to exile in 1965

**Angolan Personalities**

**Agostino Neto**

Leader of the MPLA, he won the civil war to control Angola. He sponsored the FNLC in revenge for Mobutu's support for the FNLA.

**Holden Roberto**

Leader of the FNLA, he received Mobutu's aid in the 1975-1976 war for Angola. Also aided by the United States, Roberto lost his bid for power.

**Jonas Savimbi**

Leader of UNITA, he was loosely allied with Roberto in the 1975 war. He continues to fight against Neto and his Cuban supporters.

**Belgian Personalities**

**Colonel Alain Blume**

Commanding Officer, 15th Wing; he flew the first aircraft into Kolwezi on the 20th of May.

**Paul Vanden Boeynants**

Belgian Defense Minister; he claimed that the news releases on the French and Belgian movements were necessary so the FNLC would know the units were coming to evacuate the foreigners, not to attack the rebels.

**Colonel Rik Depoorter**

Commanding Officer, Belgian Paracommando Regiment; he had his entire regiment on the way to Zaire within 30 hours of the alert; his original plan was a more effective version of what the French did on the 19th of May.

**Jean Schramme**

Belgian planter in Katanga Province;

he became a mercenary during the Katangan Secession and formed his own unit, the Leopard Battalion; after the secession failed, he crossed into Angola; returned to fight the Simbas in 1964; fought the rebellion of 1966; led the rebellion of 1967.

**Henri Simonet**

Simonet, the Belgian Foreign Minister, held off from intervention until requests from the Belgian Mission in Zaire made action unavoidable.

**Leo Tindemans**

Belgian Prime Minister who's government's handling of the crisis caused an uproar in the Belgian press.

**Colonel Frédéric J.L.A. Vandewalle**

Colonel Vandewalle was the Belgian chief of security during the colonial period; with Tshombe's secession, he served as the Belgian Consul in Katanga and oversaw the creation of the Gendarmes; after Tshombe's return to the Congo in 1964, Vandewalle came back to create a combined Belgian, mercenary, and Katangan outfit to defeat the Simbas.

French Personalities



**Lieutenant Colonel Phillippe Erulin**

**Commanding Officer, 2nd R.E.P.; he had to execute a plan 24 hours ahead of schedule, that he had never seen before.**

**President Giscard d'Estaing**

**President d'Estaing's activist approach to the Soviet's gains in Africa led to the French support of Mobutu in 1977 and the intervention in 1978; wags dubbed the actions as evidence of d'Estaing's Africa Korps; once he made the decision to act in 1978, d'Estaing allowed his subordinates to do their job.**

**Colonel Yves Gras**

**Commander of the French Military Mission; Gras was responsible for the drive to get the French to intervene; he convinced Ambassador Ross to go on record in support of intervention; Gras had the foresight to begin the planning of the operation before the decision had been made; he designed the parameters of the plan.**

**René Journiac**

**President d'Estaing's advisor on African affairs; after turning down Gras suggestion for an intervention, Journiac ended up calling Gras and**

asking him to intervene ahead of schedule.

**Colonel Larzul**

The French Military Attaché; he worked closely with Gras in planning the operation; he jumped on the second wave.

**André Ross**

The French Ambassador in Zaire; he got on well with his military staff; he came down hard in favor of a military intervention.

**American Personalities**

**President Jimmy Carter**

He virtually ignored the 1977 invasion; his attempt to play on Cuban involvement in 1978 back-fired.

**Zbigniew Brzezinski**

President Carter's National Security Advisor; he pushed for Carter to react in 1978 to the Soviet-Cuban gains on the African continent.

**Cyrus Vance**

Secretary of State in 1978; Vance knew Mobutu from the 1964 crisis; in 1978, Vance warned Mobutu to behave or Shaba III was just around the corner.

**Andrew Young**

U.S. Ambassador to the UN; Young tried to keep the Carter

Administration's focus in Africa on the question of apartheid; in 1977 he succeeded; in 1978 he failed.

## TERMS

### Zairian Terms

#### **Brazzaville Accords**

1977 agreements between Mobutu and Neto to cease support for each other's dissident groups; Mobutu's failure to comply led to Shaba II.

#### **Colombe**

Code name for the FNLC's attack on Kolwezi.

#### **The Katangan Gendarmerie**

Mercenary led force created under the guidance of Belgian officers under Colonel Vandewalle; the Katangan Gendarmerie fought the United Nations to a stand still until the latter received more support; after the Katangan Secession, the Gendarmes went into exile in Angola; returning in 1964 at the behest of Tshombe, the Gendarmes, again led by Vandewalle's Belgians and mercenaries, helped put down the Simba rebellion; after the 1966 and 1967 mercenary rebellions,

**Kaymanyola Division**

the Gendarmes returned to Angola;  
see FNLC.

**Simbas**

The 'elite' FAZ unit that protected  
Kolwezi.

Rebel movement that exploded  
against the central government in  
1964; based on superstition and  
discontent, the Simbas took two-thirds  
of the Congo before they were  
defeated by a Belgian-American-  
Zairian coalition; it was the Simbas  
seizure of Stanleyville and 2000  
hostages that led to the Dragon  
operations.

**Zairianization**

Mobutu's program of authenticity to  
break all colonial ties by renaming  
everything and everyone with a  
western or colonial associated name;  
under this program, the Congo became  
Zaire.

**Belgian Terms**

**The Dragon Operations**

Dragon Rouge: the Belgian-American  
airborne operation to take Stanleyville  
on 24 November 1964; Dragon Noir:  
the rescue at Paulis on 26 November

**Red Bean**

1964.

Code word for the 1978 Belgian operation at Kolwezi.

**Samaritan**

The Belgian plan to evacuate expatriates from Shaba I.

**French Terms**

**Bonité**

The final name given to Operation Leopard by the French General Staff.

**Leopard**

The original code word for the French intervention in Kolwezi.

**Other**

**Morris-Knudsen**

American engineering firm that had its base camp northwest of Kolwezi.

**ACRONYMS**

**ANC**

Armée Nationale Congolaise; name of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's armed forces after independence; formerly the Force Publique under Belgian colonial rule; the ANC; see FAZ.

**FAZ**

Forces Armées Zairois; the ANC's new name in 1974; it did not make them any better.

**FLEC**

Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda

FNLA	<p>Enclave; Angolan opposition group supported by Mobutu.</p> <p>National Front for the Liberation of Angola; Angolan insurgent organization led by Holden Roberto and supported by Mobutu and the United States; defeated in the Angolan Civil War; still maintained bases in Zaire in 1977.</p>
FNLC	<p>National Front for the Liberation of the Congo; the Katangan Gendarmerie's adopted political title under General Mbumba; the FNLC allied itself with the MPLA of Neto in Angola; it launched the Shaba invasions in 1977 and 1978.</p>
FODELICO	<p>Democratic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo; opposition group formed in 1974 around survivors of the 1964 rebellion.</p>
FSA	<p>African Socialist Forces: opposition group formed in 1964 after the fall of Stanleyville to government forces.</p>
GECAMINES	<p>See UMHK.</p>
MARC	<p>Action Movement for the Resurrection of the Congo; opposition party formed</p>

	as a breakaway from the MPR in 1974.
<b>MMF</b>	<b>French Military Mission</b>
<b>MNLC</b>	<b>National Movement for the Liberation of the Congo; Marxist-Leninist group formed in 1965.</b>
<b>MPLA</b>	<b>Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola; Angolan insurgent organization led by Agostino Neto; helped by the Cubans and the FNLC, the MPLA defeated its opposition to win control of Angola.</b>
<b>MPR</b>	<b>Popular Movement of the Revolution; Mobutu's single party created in the late 1960s; under the MPR's platform, Mobutu pushed through the laws making him a virtual dictator.</b>
<b>OAU</b>	<b>Organization of African Unity</b>
<b>PRP</b>	<b>Peoples Revolutionary Party: Another post-1964 opposition group. remained a disaster in the field.</b>
<b>UMHK</b>	<b>Union Minière du Haut-Katanga; nationalized by Mobutu in 1966 to become Générale Congolaise des Minerais(GECOMIN); then rechartered with a new agreement with the</b>

Belgians as Générale des Carrières et  
des Mines(GECAMINES) in 1971;  
GECAMINES was the principal  
employee of the expatriates in  
Kolwezi.

**UNITA**

National Union for the Total  
Independence of Angola; Angolan  
insurgents led by Jonas Savimbi;  
sometimes allies of the FNLA, South  
Africa, or the United States; always an  
enemy of Neto and the MPLA;UNITA  
controls the bush in Angola.

**ZAMISH**

United States Military Assistance  
Mission in Zaire.



**APPENDIX B**

## CHRONOLOGY

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
30 Jun 1960	Independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
9 Jul 1960	Katangan Secession begins; Belgium intervenes as the ANC mutinies; Colonel Joseph Mobutu named ANC Chief of Staff; Katangan Gendarmerie recruited.
15 Jul 1960- May 1963	First UN troops arrive; UN campaigns for three years to restore the central government's control over the country.
29 May 1963	Tshombe surrenders Katanga and goes into exile; the Katangan Gendarmerie cross into Angola.
Apr 1964- May 1964	Minor uprisings in the eastern Congo expand into major rebellion due to the ANC's penchant for brutality and distaste for combat.
Jun 1964	The Simba Rebellion explodes and consumes most of the eastern Congo; Tshombe returns from exile to become the Prime Minister.
5 Aug 1964	Stanleyville, with over 1500 expatriates, falls into rebel hands; Tshombe asks for help; Belgium dispatches

**Vandewalle to oversee the campaign against the Simbas; mercenaries and the Katangan Gendarmerie return to fight under Tshombe's banner.**

- Mid-Sep 1964**      **Vandewalle begins his campaign.**
- 24 Nov 1964**      **Operation DRAGON ROUGE by the Belgian Paracommando Regiment and American C130s retakes Stanleyville just ahead of Vandewalle's ground column, saving some 1500 expatriates.**
- 26 Nov 1964**      **Operation DRAGON NOIR conducted at Paulis; Paracommando Regiment withdraws to Belgium.**
- Nov 1964**          **War continues into the next year and numerous expatriates are killed by the rebels in revenge.**
- 29 Mar 1965**      **Watsa falls to government forces and the war is declared over.**
- 25 Nov 1965**      **General Mobutu seizes power; Tshombe goes into exile again.**
- 1966**              **Abortive Mutiny in Stanleyville by the Baka Regiment of the Katangan Gendarmerie; put down by Denard and mercenaries.**

- Jun 1967** Tshombe kidnapped and imprisoned in Algeria; he died two years later of a 'heart attack'.
- Jul 1967** Jean Schramme leads the Mercenary Revolt at Stanleyville; fights his way to Bukavu and held that city for two months ; crossed into Rwanda; Katangans fighting with him accept amnesty and are killed; Mobutu take revenge against former Gendarmes in Katanga Province; led by Mbumba, the Katangans return to exile in Angola.
- 1967-1974** Mobutu consolidates power; ruins economy. and carries out his 'authenticity' program.
- Jul-Aug 1975** Mobutu sends the FAZ against Neto's MPLA in Angola; The Cubans and the FNLC, formerly the Katangan Gendarmerie, route the FAZ.
- 28 Feb 1976** Mobutu and Neto sign the Brazzaville Accords, agreeing to end their support of opposition groups working against each other; Mobutu continues supporting UNITA.
- 8 Mar 1977** FNLC, led by Mbumba, cross into Shaba in the first invasion; war lasts eighty days; the FAZ is still a disaster and the Moroccans come to the rescue.

- 28 May 1977**      **Mobutu claims victory over the FNLC; he purges the FAZ, and conducts trials for 91 persons on various charges of treason.**
- 11 May 1978**      **FNLC cross the Zambian border into Shaba; Shaba II begins; the rebels move on Kolwezi.**
- 13 May 1978**      **The FNLC open their attack on Kolwezi; the FAZ falls apart; the French military advisor team is captured by the rebels; selected expatriates and locals are selected for trial.**  
**First word of the attack reaches French Embassy; Gras sees Babia; 311th Airborne Battalion placed on alert.**
- 14 May 1978**      **Executions underway in Kolwezi of those found guilty of crimes against the 'People'; FNLC still fairly disciplined; FAZ still holding headquarters in New Town.**  
  
**Gras pushes for French troops to encadre the FAZ's 311th and 133rd Battalions; Mobutu asks for help of all kinds; 311th and the 133rd to go to Lubumbashi to prepare for an overland drive on Kolwezi.**  
  
**Crisis cells operating in Brussels, Paris, and Washington.**

**15 May 1978**

**Eight to ten expatriates are reported dead in Kolwezi; Morris-Knudsen preparing to evacuate its camp; reports coming out via GECAMINES in Lubumbashi.**

**French Embassy on 24 hour watch; Gras goes after the Belgian Chargé to force a Belgian reaction to the situation; Mobutu calls in Major Mahele and gives him the order to drop one company on Kolwezi the next day.**

**16 May 1978**

**At 0630 the 2nd Company, 311th Airborne Battalion, began its operation Kolwezi; the unit is destroyed; its attack sets off the massacres in Kolwezi; the 311th's main body begins overland march on Kolwezi; Morris-Knudsen delays its evacuations.**

**Gras has planning staff set up; he gets word of the 311th's operations; combined planning begins with the Belgian military mission; Ambassador Ross calls for French intervention in cooperation with the Belgians and Americans.**

**President Carter orders the 82nd Airborne Division placed on alert, and announces that fact to the press.**

**Belgian Paracommando Regiment on alert under Operation plan Samaritan; one company and three C130s;**

**alert upgraded to the full Regiment at midnight.**

**17 May 1978**

**Sporadic slaughter continues in Kolwezi; Morris-Knudsen conducts its evacuation without problem.**

**The 311th reaches the Kolwezi airport by evening; it is cut off and out of ammunition.**

**Gras continues planning for an intervention; notified the 2nd R.E.P. is on alert for Zaire; tentative date of the operation is to be the 20th; French pilots authorized to fly combat missions using FAZ Mirage fighters; Gras placed in overall command of French forces.**

**0200 Colonel Depoorter receives orders to plan for a seventy-two hour operation in Kolwezi to evacuate the foreigners; Paracommando Regiment readies for deployment under Operation Red Bean; at 1900 the government gives a conditional 'go' to the operation; Deployment is to begin the next day with execution on the 20th; the Paras are prohibited from coordinating with the French; the Belgian government discloses the Belgian and the French movement alerts.**

**1030 the 2nd R.E.P. goes on alert; ready for movement at 2000; Erulin has only a general idea of his mission.**

18 May 1978

Communications with Kolwezi lost; Mobutu flies into the airport with news media to see Mahele.

Gras completes plan and gets Paris' approval; Paris requests the operation be moved up, Gras refuses; Journiac calls and makes the same request, Gras refuses; Gras holds meeting with Belgians and Americans to coordinate the operations; the Belgians are evasive, and when Gras is told the rebels have been ordered to kill their hostages and retreat, he moves the operation up to the 19th.

0220 Erulin is ordered to move the 2nd R.E.P. to Solenarza Airbase for deployment to Zaire; the first aircraft departs at 1520; Erulin lands at Kinshasa at 2315 only to learn the operation goes the next morning.

1315 the first C130 of the Belgians' 15th Wing takes to the air with Colonel Depoorter on board; 36 hours later the entire Paracommando Regiment is closed at Kamina.

19 May 1978

The FNLC begin departing Kolwezi, leaving around 500 combatants behind along with local supporters; by now most of the killing is over.



0330 the 2nd R.E.P.'s briefing begins; first wave to go at dawn; delays and equipment failures force the first wave to wait until 1050 for takeoff; first assault wave over Kolwezi at 1540.

The second wave is further delayed at Kamina; Gras cancels its drop until the 20th.

Erulin reports all objectives secure before dark on the 19th; 2nd R.E.P. continues operations all night.

1400 the first Belgian aircraft lands at Kamina; Depoorter learns of the French operation and requests permission to conduct an assault landing before dark to reinforce the French; Brussels refuses, but gives approval for the operation on the 20th; Depoorter redesigns his mission and the unit prepares for action.

20 May

Erulin opens the days operation with the 3rd Company penetrating Manika; his second wave comes in at dawn to take the new town; firefight breaks out between the 3rd Company and the Paracommando Regiment.

Depoorter's first wave comes in on schedule at dawn; 3rd Para Battalion moves on the old town, followed shortly by the 1st Para Battalion; lead units run into a firefight with the French.

Gras lands and grudgingly turns over the European quarters to the Belgians to evacuate the expatriates; the

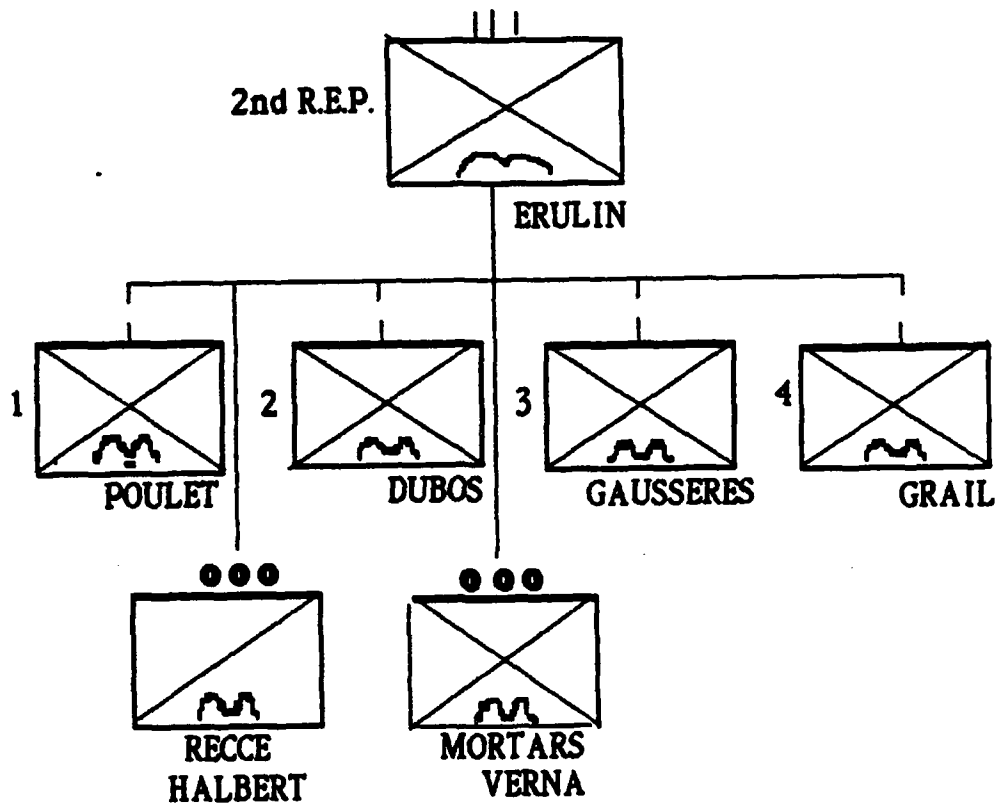
**French continue to flush out the rebels; the French battle a large number of rebels at Metal-Shaba; by days end the Belgians have evacuated some 2000 expatriates.**

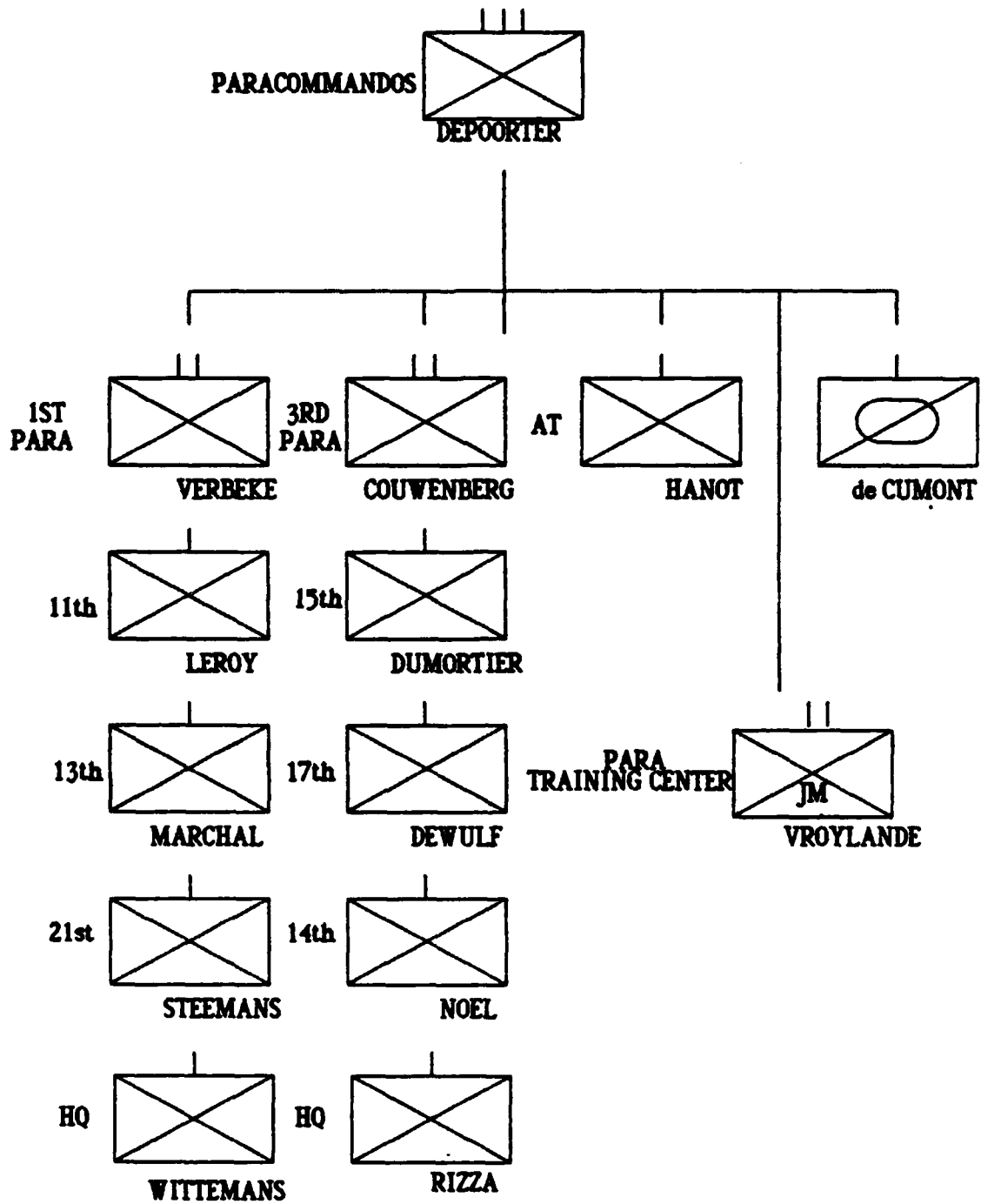
**21 May 1978** By sunset Depoorter completes his mission and receives permission to withdraw to Kamina.  
**Erulin continues operations; vehicles come in from Lubumbashi.**

**22 May 1978** The Paracommando Regiment returns to Kamina; the unit prepares for redeployment to Belgium; the 1st Para Battalion is detailed to stay behind until relieved by the 3rd on 25 June; 3rd Para remains until July.

**27 May 1978** The 2nd R.E.P. moves to Lubumbashi; remains three weeks until the lead elements of the Inter-African Force arrives, and departs for Corsica.

**APPENDIX C**





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