

Denmark and Belgian colonialism

A study of the Danish political and economic relations
with Belgian Congo, 1908-1960

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Martin Ottovay Jørgensen

Supervisor: Marianne Rostgaard, Associate Professor, Ph.d.

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Summary in Danish

Dansk selvforståelse i forhold til den koloniale fortid kan meget forsimplet beskrives som et sæt forestillinger om nobel tilbageholdenhed i tiden som koloni-herrer, dernæst ofringen af dette imperiale potentiale for den højere sags tjeneste og så begyndende omkring 1960 med flere europæiske koloniers selvstændighed en videreførelse af denne højere sags tjeneste med teknisk assistance og udviklingsbistand mhp. at lade 'dem' 'hale ind' på 'os'. Hensigten med specialet er at udfordre disse forestillinger.

I tiden fra 1885 til 1908 var der i den belgiske konge Leopold's koloni Congo Free State op mod 400-500 danskere, der gjorde tjeneste som bl.a. søfolk på Congo-floden og officerer i koloni-hæren. De danske soldater og søfolks tilstedeværelse har givet en stærk og direkte forbindelse til det koloniale Afrika, hvorfor det konkrete udgangspunkt for at udfordre den danske selvforståelse er en globalhistorisk undersøgelse af de danske relationer til Belgisk Congo da kolonien fra 1908 til 1960 efterfølgende hørte under den Belgiske stat. Der er benyttet materiale mestendels fra de danske og belgiske udenrigsministerier og i mindre grad fra ØK, Landbrugsrådet, Ingeniørforeningen og Dansk Skibsrederforening såvel som populærlitteratur og aviser.

I hoveddelen af specialet er der søgt redegjort for de danske private og statslige relationer i og med Belgisk Congo fra 1900 til 1960 og hvorledes man i den danske offentlighed så på Belgisk Congo. Meget kort kan disse relationer fra 1908 til Anden Verdenskrig opsummeres som værende afspejlinger af den danske eksport økonomi med dens rødder i landbruget og de tilknyttede industrier samt handlen med Belgien, Storbritannien og Tyskland. I denne periode fungerede Belgisk Congo mest af alt som supplement til især de franske kolonier, der synes at have været de mest interessante for danske virksomheder. Efter Anden Verdenskrig og frem til midten af 1950'erne ser det ud til at gnidningerne med især Storbritannien som handelspartner førte til at man fra dansk side forsøgte sig med Benelux landene, østblokken og flere af de europæiske kolonier i Afrika som formuleringen af alternativer, omend nogle mindre af slagsen. I årene fra 1955 til 1959 så man derfor fra både dansk og belgisk side flere initiativer til at at promovere en intensivering i relationerne i form af et dansk initieret delegationsbesøg i den belgiske koloni, en belgisk koloni-udstilling på Frederiksberg Rådhus og en belgisk delegation på virksomhedsbesøg og afsluttende tilnærmelsesvis 'envejs' statsmiddag på Christiansborg med deltagelse af statsminister H.C. Hansen og Minister for Udenrigsøkonomi Jens Otto Krag og flere andre ministre, repræsentanter for interesse-organisationerne og journalister fra Belgisk Congo. Danmark nåede på denne baggrund at blive en af de vigtigste handelspartnere inden for bestemte nicher af den belgiske koloniøkonomi. Samlet set afspejlede handelsrelationerne de globale strømninger og begivenheder med de to verdenskrige og depressionen og i forhold til de danske totale import og eksport tal udgjorde reelt volumen begge veje aldrig mere end 1%. I det store billede kan det derfor argumenteres, at de realpolitisk og økonomisk var lidet betydningsfulde. Congos uafhængighed i 1960 betød endvidere også afslutningen på de gensidige forhåbninger om et eksporteventyr.

Baggrunden for handlen med kolonien skal dels ses i interessen i at tjene penge og dels i de pro-koloniale og stereotype diskurser og forestillinger omkring de Europæiske imperier og deres Afrikanske subjekter der om ikke gennemsyrede dansk offentlighed, så som minimum var svære at udfordre helt frem til 1960 via deres tilstedeværelse gennem indflydelse udefra, skolebogsmaterialer, medier, populær litteratur, bredere forestillinger om moderniteten og mere specifikt Congo-litteraturen og siden det belgiske pr-projekt. Det lykkedes kun den lille gruppe af akademisk uddannede journalister med fokus på det internationale stof samt den danske diplomat Svend Aage Sandager-Jeppesen, der fra omkring årsskiftet 1957/1958 fungerede som dansk generalkonsul i den belgiske koloni, meget sent at udfordre de overordnede pro-imperiale diskurser, herunder den belgiske moderniseringsdiskurs, der både i Danmark, andre Europæiske lande og USA søgtes anvendt som *public diplomacy* i forhold til kolonien.

I epilogen har jeg søgt at tage fat på den danske rolle i den belgiske (udviklings) kolonialisme, forskellen mellem denne og måden man i samtiden så på denne, samt afslutningvis at foreslå en måde at forstå og diskutere den danske rolle i forhold til den belgiske kolonialisme. Her slår jeg til lyd for, at den faktiske volumen af handlen spiller en ganske lille rolle og at vores fokus rettere bør på være på det faktum at der var relationer, og dernæst at de med stor sandsynlighed kunne have været intensiveret hvis ikke udviklingen i Congo havde taget den retning den tog med uafhængigheden. Danmark var fra 1850 til 1960 ikke en koloni-magt i Afrika, men i perioden var danskerne lige så racistiske som de befolkninger, hvis stater var kolonimagter i Afrika. Og havde mulighederne været der, havde der også været søgt at tjene flere penge gennem kolonihandlen. Den danske deltagelse i det belgiske koloniale projekt bør derfor søgt forstået og diskuteret på det principielle plan i lige så høj grad som på det 'praktiske' plan. Men danske virksomheder og den danske stat plejede ikke kun omgang med den belgiske kolonialisme. Der var også forbindelse og interesser i forhold til de britiske, franske, portugisiske og hollandske koloniale projekter. Det akademiske arbejde og de diskussioner, der hidtil har været igangsat på det europæiske og globale plan har dog ikke ført større gennembrud med sig. Dette har især skyldtes at den (vestlige) akademiske historie disciplin har opereret med dels et (skriftligt) kildemateriale, der har favoriseret vestlige og modernitets-favoriserende forestillinger, og dels har opereret med et syn på fortiden som værende fraværende, og der derfor ikke i tilstrækkeligt omfang har kunnet rumme andre forestillinger om koloni-tiden eller udfordre vores egen. Tiden blev set som værende 'forbi' så at sige.

På denne baggrund foreslår jeg en ny 'levende' og globaliseret tilgang til ikke kun den danske udenrigspolitiske historie, men også den bredere Danmarkshistorie på et historiefilosfisk fundament baseret på Berber Bevernages tanker med intentionen om at bryde med de skarpheden i de nuværende fortids-, nutids- og fremtidskoncepter og i stedet imødekomme at 'historien' fortsat er nærværende og forsøge at forbinde de steder og mennesker der på forskellige måder har været en del af dansk historie i Belgisk Congo som diskuteret her såvel som de andre europæiske kolonier mv. Hermed kunne man få en udvidet forståelse via en 'glokaliseret' og humaniseret historie.

Introductory Matters

Along with other European states Denmark took part in the hot water colonialism of the 17th century. This resulted in Danish control of three Caribbean islands that effectively became Danish colonies under the name of the Danish West Indies and some small colonies/trade stations on the Gold Coast in West Africa and Tranquebar on the eastern coast of India. Participation in the Atlantic slave trade and the relocation of approximately 100.000 Africans to do slave labour was an integral part of the colonial economy. In 1721 Greenland was added as a cold water colony. Whereas the possessions in Africa and India were sold to Great Britain in the middle of the 19th century and the Danish West Indies to the US in 1916, Greenland remained a Danish colony until 1953 where it was given the status of a Danish county. Although Denmark didn't directly take part in the 19th century European imperialism in Africa with colonies of its own, it was nonetheless involved through the spatial defining of the colonies on the African continent by signing the 1885 Berlin Act. The Belgian King Leopold's Congo Free State that became one of the most horrible European colonial projects also saw a large number of Danes and other Scandinavians enrolling as mercenaries in *Force Publique* and captains and sailors on the Congo river.¹

Aim and scope of the thesis

This thesis will seek to challenge the Danish self image in relation to the Danish colonial past and hence the relations to the countries considered parts of the 'Third World'. A brief and somewhat simplistic outline has Denmark possessing colonies, although only a few, and more often than not we generally considered ourselves decent colonial masters. Karen Thisted from the Danish National Museum has noted how the Danish narrative portrayed

“(...) Denmark as a benevolent and thoroughly humanistic midget nation, which ironically sacrificed its imperial potentials for the sake of justice, but hereby gained the greater honour on a moral and ethical level.”²

Moreover, as time passed with the colonies becoming independent states, we also helped them with technical assistance and development aid to allow them to 'catch up'. What is interesting in this narrative is the rupture; the years from c. 1850 to 1960 simply seem to have fallen out. On the other hand aid to Ghana was argued as helping a now independent country that was a former colony.³ Beyond an interest in this particular aspect of the Danish historical narrative in my capacity as a Danish citizen, historical research has lately been turned towards the developmental colonialist years from the late phase of imperialism to the beginning of the decolonisation processes from 1900 to 1960 and hence to a focus on

1 Keith, Arthur Berridale (1919), pp. 56-65, Rostgaard, Marianne and Lotte Schou (2010), pp. 9-11 and <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/assessment/estimates.faces> (last accessed 13.02.2011)

2 Thisted, Karen (2008) from the English abstract

3 Forsingdal, Anette (2003) pp. 27-29

continuity more than ruptures. These two research interests form the backdrop of the urge to take a closer look on the Danish relations with Belgian Congo in the period from 1908 to the 30th of June 1960. No literature exists on the subject as it has only been mentioned in passing and never been systematically investigated. Therefore we have to start out by documenting and outlining these relations, and the thesis will therefore

- outline the actual Danish activities by both Danish public and private actors *within* and *in relation to* Belgian Congo and
- document the image of Belgian Congo in the Danish public sphere

in order to discuss the possible discrepancy between the actual activities and the public image as well as discuss the Danish role in the Belgian development colonialism. Looking into these matters hopefully helps to fill the obvious gaps in our knowledge not only of the final Belgian attempts to gain from the colony and how more European states and companies than previously sought to take part in this as trade partners. At least, this was the aim.

Published articles and monographs on the subject

With regard to Belgian Congo specifically, Anne Vibeke Knudsen, former director of the museum on the island of Bornholm, has edited an anthology on the individuals of Bornholm and their service as sailors, mercenaries and administrators to the Leopoldian regime and/or early years of Belgian Congo⁴ of great value. Frits Andersen, a Danish professor of literary history, has focused on the images of Congo in European literature also including the books written by the Danish Congo veterans from the turn of the century in his doctoral thesis.⁵ Although bringing good insights to the fore, these publications are unfortunately disconnected from the wider foreign and trade policies aspects of Denmark related to Belgian Congo as well as the Danish companies and their histories as for instance the political scientist David N. Gibbs has done with that of American companies in the period from the 1930's to the 1960's⁶ and the Belgian doctoral student Jan-Frederik Abbeloos on Belgian companies from 1870-1930.⁷

Considering publications with a broader focus, the volume in the series on the history of Danish Foreign policy dealing with the period from 1914 to 1945 written by Bo Lidegaard, a historian employed in the Prime Minister's Office, expectedly mirrored the Danish political and economic orientation towards Northern Europe, Germany especially, and the Baltic countries and Russia. Accordingly no mention of the approximately 4-500 Danes serving in Belgian colonial service nor the selling of rifles to the colonial army, the *Force Publique* by the Danish arms manufacturer *Dansk Riffel Syndikat* was made.

4 Knudsen, Ann Vibeke (ed.) (2003)

5 Andersen, Frits (2010)

6 Gibbs, David N. (1991)

7 Abbeloos, Jan-Frederik (2008) pp. 105-127

Although still limited in scope compared to other European states and companies originating there, Denmark and Danish companies had begun pursuing interests beyond the Atlantic world. It may of course be argued that compared to the Danish trade with Germany, and the Baltic countries and Russia, trade with Sub-Saharan Africa was insignificant. Not to mention it, however, sustains the collective amnesia regarding Denmark and sub-Saharan relations from approx. 1850 to 1960.⁸ The following volume on the period from 1945 to 1972 by Thorsten Borring Olesen and Poul Villaume, each a capacity within their fields of 20th century Danish foreign policy, has provided a much needed archival based narrative of this period. However, one can not ignore that Villaume and Olesen also mirrored their volume to the overall orientation of the Danish political and economic interests and thereby locking their analytic framework primarily on the East-West dimension of the cold war and the European economic relations leaving out relations with other parts of the world not yet 'consumed' by this combined prism or even in some cases, as Belgian Congo, already part of it.⁹ Kristine Midtgaard's book on the Danish UN policies from 1945 to 1965 also characteristically focused on Northern Africa looking into the strongly pro-western Danish support of the French in the Algeria 'question' as well as the Danish siding with the British against Egypt in late 1956.¹⁰

Danish research publications looking into the Danish relations with the European colonial empires and specifically on Belgian Congo remain very few altogether, and those of the former category can to some extent also be argued to have a certain epistemological inadequacy and corresponding ontological parallel with regards to Denmark in global affairs. Despite some attempts of global history by Danish historians¹¹ in the 1980's, the nation state prism nonetheless still seems to a certain extent to cloud the perspectives in Danish historiography. This thesis is therefore relevant in this attempt to kick the door in with Danish relations to Belgian colonialism, but a relevance that needs to be balanced by a necessary humility writing as a newcomer.

Methodological Aspects

To accommodate the complexities of the research field that covers both the fields of foreign and trade policy history, media history, economic and business history, it is necessary to look beyond the established way of looking at external political relations and trade. I consider global history suitable to this end. The broad analytical framework proposed by the research group *Communities, Comparisons, Connections*¹² under the direction of Eric Vanhaute¹³ at Ghent University on the connections between businesses, state-building and changing hegemonic powers provide a useful point of departure. In as far

8 Lidegaard, Bo (2003)

9 Villaume, Poul and Olesen, Thorsten Borring (2006)

10 Midtgaard, Kristine (2005) pp. 165-195 and 234-270

11 See for instance "Karavaner og kompagnier" about Niels Steensgaard in the journal Siden Saxo no. 1. 1987.

12 <http://www.ccc.ugent.be/home>

13 See also Eric Vanhaute (2009)

as I see it, the aim of writing global history is also, however, to go beyond what Anton De Baets has called the ontological, epistemological, ethical, utilitarian and didactic ethnocentrism¹⁴ by avoiding both nation state-centric and Eurocentric histories in order to bring new understandings more in balance with both past and current global changes and allowing other peoples than those of the West to become subjects in their own history. It is not necessary to have the entire planet as the analytical framework, nor to abandon the point of departure in a particular nation state. Global histories or global meta-narratives still allow for shifts in the focus to be made from each location and the relations between them - in this case between Denmark, Belgium and Belgian Congo - to the global picture.

Without wanting to venture into a deeper analysis and criticism of the discipline of history, nor that of global history, a few things are worth commenting on. With its Christian origins and role in the royal administrations, European state-building projects and imperialism, the Western historiographical tradition has certain problems providing an adequate framework for understanding peoples, cultures, ethnic groups, polities and regions that do not heed the same framework, sense of time, mindsets, organisation and so on. Moreover, echoing the criticisms of the subaltern studies against the Western oriented way of writing history, Michael Geyer and Charles Bright also intended for global history

*“to shatter the silences surrounding global practices, by tracking them, describing them, and presenting them historically and (...) to facilitate public cultures as free and equal marketplace of communication among the many voices of different histories and memories.”*¹⁵

Global history also allows for a perspective that follows the changes in the relation between human and nature, something too often forgotten in most undertakings by historians. This point of departure seems to me a transformation of the notion of objectivity from the natural sciences towards a notion of an open and critical engagement, one that I take my cue from. It is noteworthy that the journalist Peter Thygesen has been the one to show the most interest in the Danish connections to Belgian Congo so far.¹⁶

Unpublished sources

Due to the lack of literature dealing specifically with Danish relations with Belgian Congo, the larger part of the thesis is, besides the secondary literature, based on records from primarily the Danish State Archives and to a lesser extent Belgium. It was necessary to include records on both Belgian Congo and Belgium as using only those related to the colony would have given just a part of the picture, why the most important archival sources have been the despatches from the Danish envoys in Brussels and later

14 De Baets, Anton (2007) pp. 456-461

15 Geyer, Michael and Bright, Charles (1995) p. 1059

16 See for instance Thygesen, Peter (2001)

the supplementing despatches from the consular general in Leopoldville. The Danish Foreign Ministry's records related to mainly foreign policy, trade and public relations allowed for a broader perspective beyond the diplomatic reporting. In the handover process from the Foreign Ministry to the National Archives, however, certain relatively interesting folders have been discarded. These contained documents regarding the growing amount of public relations work the ministry took upon itself in the 1950's to improve the Danish ability to compete at the international level and in relation to Belgian Congo specifically, the work undertaken by the Belgians in Denmark regarding Belgian Congo as well as the Danish-Congolese exchange of goods following independence.¹⁷ Other material come from the East Asian Company as well as the lobby organisations for agriculture, engineers and shipping.¹⁸

The used Belgian records come from both the Diplomatic¹⁹ and African Archives²⁰ of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. There may be relevant material in the Belgian Ministry of Economic Affairs, but not all folders have been inventoried yet.²¹ The principal questions regarding the Belgian records will be taken up elsewhere.

Published sources

Press reference works, 'Congo novels' published up until 1946 by the Danes that had worked for the Leopoldian and/or Belgian colonial authorities in Congo, popular journals as *Det Ny Radioblad/Se og Hør* and *Illustreret Familiejournel* along with Western popular culture shed light on the Danish public image of both Africa and Belgian Congo and their peoples as well as Belgian colonialism until 1948. For the years from 1949 to 1960 *Se og Hør* and six Danish daily national newspapers have provided the perspectives on how Belgian Congo, Belgian colonialism and the Congolese were presented to the Danish public. The selected newspapers are the Communist newspaper, *Land and Folk*, the Social Democratic newspaper and often government mouthpiece *Social-Demokraten*, later *Aktuelt*, the social liberal newspaper *Politiken*, the newspaper initially a WWII illegal resistance newspaper and with time centre right *Information*, the liberal oriented newspaper of *Morgenavisen Jyllandsposten* and finally the conservatively oriented newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*. Save the editorials and 20 articles in fact written by Danish journalists as independent analyses or following trips to Belgian Congo, the majority of all news on Congo were from French, British and American press agencies. The articles appear mainly from early 1959 onwards with approximately 25% of all articles appearing in the month prior to Congolese independence when the situation was becoming 'news'.

17 See appendix 1 for the list of missing folders on p. 79

18 See the complete list of used archival materials at pp. 64-66

19 Archives Diplomatique, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AF/T/37/4/EXPO-DK, 1954-1960 and Archives Diplomatique, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark 5.163

20 Archives Africaines, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AE/II 1178. Demandes d'autorisation et de facilités pour voyages de particuliers. 629) Mission commerciale danoise 1956 (3201) and Archives Africaines, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, CABB 57, Dossier 486, Delegation Commerciale Danoise Au Congo Belge

21 Email correspondence with Archivist Filip Strubbe from the Belgian National Archives Section 5 on Contemporary Archives on October 15th 2010.

Structure

Three analytical parts will follow this introductory matters. The first part is meant to give an overview of Belgian development colonialism in the Congo from 1908 to 1960 so as to provide a backdrop for discussing the Danish public images of Congo and Belgian policies.

The second part will seek to balance two elements. It will shed light on how Belgian Congo and Belgian development colonialism was seen in Denmark in the following formative periods 1920-1948, 1949-1959 and 1959-1960 as well as document the Danish political and economic relations with primarily Belgian Congo and secondarily Belgium through the period from 1920 to 1960. The periodisation of this part (-1932, 1933-1955 and 1956-)²² is both indicative of the trends in Denmark and the larger picture of the shifts of the 'tectonic plates' of the globalising capitalist economy.

Following the second part of the analysis, the discrepancy between the image(s) of Belgian Congo, Belgian colonialism, contemporary Danish and Belgian views on Belgian development colonialism and the various Congolese ethnic groups and reality 'on the ground' as well as the connections between Denmark and Belgian colonialism will be discussed. Berber Bevernage's criticism of modern historical discourse, notion of an 'irrevocable past' and according call for an alternative historical time provided the framework.

At the end of the thesis, a brief conclusion will sum up the findings of the thesis as well as points to new potentially fruitful paths for further research.

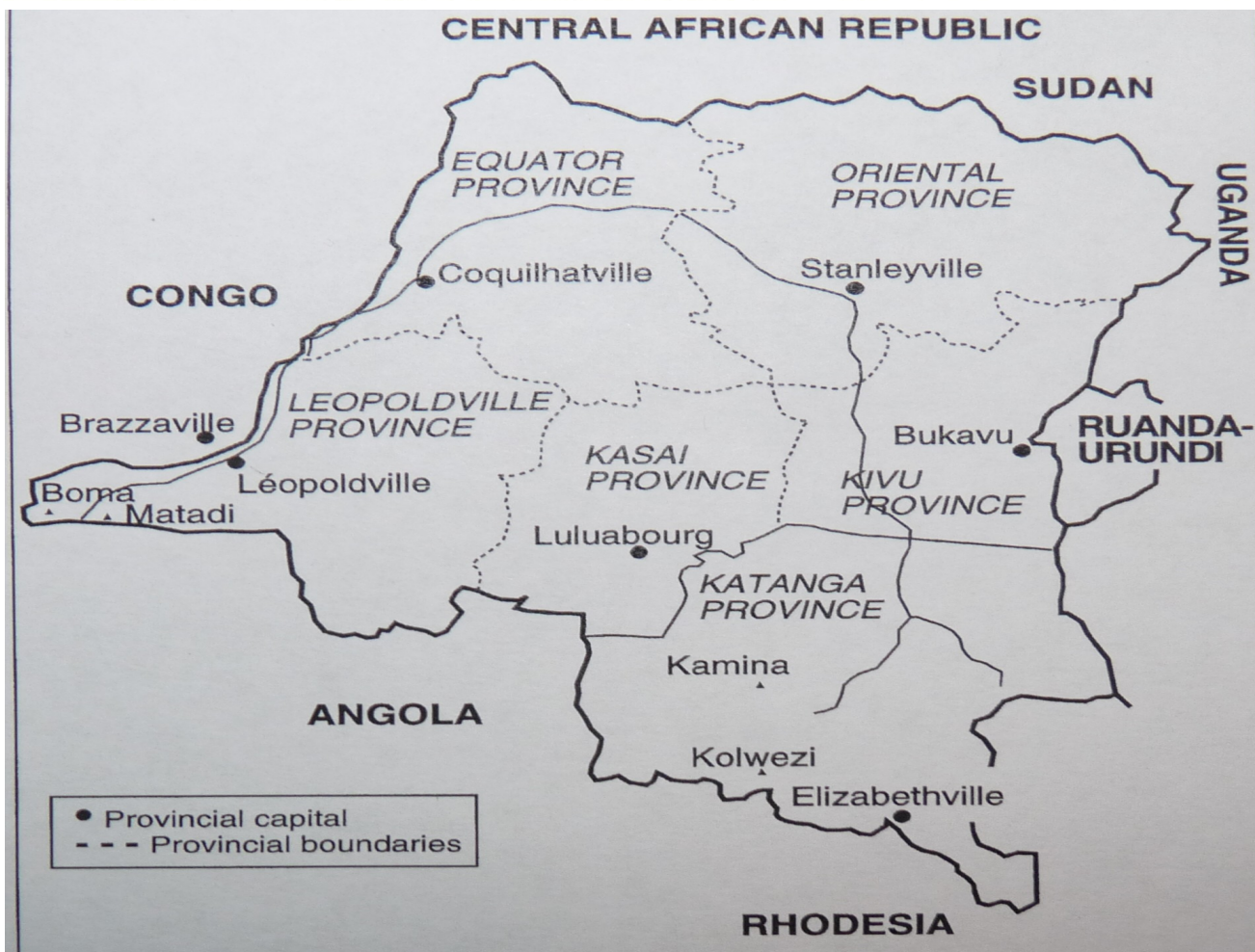
22 This division originally goes from 1898-1932 (regulation and internationalisation), 1933-1956 (industrial growth under protective restrictions) and 1957-1981 (export orientation and the expanding welfare state) and is borrowed with some narrative modification from **Andersen, Martin Jes and Andersen, Steen** (2008) p. 266

European imperialism, colonialism and Belgian development colonialism in Congo, 1908-1960

European imperialism and colonialism led to social and ecological degradation around the world. The Caribbean and Latin America saw their societies and agricultural landscapes changed the most and the earliest with the spread of alien livestock and their bacteria leading to mass death of local populations and the import of Africans to become slaves in the new mining and plantation regimes. From 1820 to 1930 the temperate landscape zones of mainly Canada, the US, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the northern African coast were sought molded after existing habits with European animals and crops as well as more than 50 million settlers forced on the 'new' world. In Asia, the Americas and Africa the best agricultural lands were seized for export production supported by maintenance of old or establishment of new inequalities. Accordingly the balances between the various local patterns of multi-cropping, rotation, green manures, seed selection, agro-forestry and integration of small animal populations were altered radically into a farming concept shaped by capitalism, industrialisation and eurocentrism and the dependency of fossil fuels, machinery, synthesized fertilisers and industrially produced feeding-stuffs. Through the first half of the 20th century food production were aimed at colonial self-sufficiency. This changed in 1945 when the subsidised breadbaskets of North America, Australia, New Zealand, Europe and its colonies needed markets. Soon most people living in what became 'the third world' saw land reforms. Local food production in the colonies and some third world countries shifted to increasingly externalised food productions due to pressure from the surplus producing West. Settlers, cash crop farmers, urban as well as rural workers around the world were gradually becoming partially if not completely dependent on consuming either foods from the imperial centres and western economies or local cash crops. The cash crop production of sugar, cotton and even more so rubber and palm oil as well as extraction of minerals as tin, bauxite and finally petroleum were inextricably linked to the industrialisation, modernisation and consumption patterns of Europe as was the system of forced labour, forced relocations and violence. Extensive infrastructure projects and labour policies in the colonies from 1900 onwards reflected this. For a growing part of the populations lives in the cities also followed with worsening chances of sustaining themselves as the urbanisation rates were increasingly disconnecting from industrialisation and production rates in contrast to Europe. Forced removals were common and often part of colonial policy.²³

The Belgian colony in Congo were in these respects not different from the British, French and Portuguese colonies. The following two maps show Belgian Congo in Africa (1950) and Belgian Congo internally (1950s).

23 Bessel, Richard and Haake, Claudia (2009) pp. 1-11, Booth, Anne E. (2007) pp. 1-8, Davis, Mike (2001) pp. 1-190, Stearns, Peter (2006) pp. 1-142 and Weis, Tony (2007) pp. 29-100



Belgian Congo 1908-1952: Salami tactics and tight reins

Belgium took over the Congo Free State from King Leopold II in 1908 after increasing international criticism. However, the criticism of the Leopoldian colonial regime may have been less decisive than the potential to make clever use of the colony by including it in the Latin Monetary Union along with Belgium. Hereby the colony simultaneously increased the amount of coins Belgium issued for domestic circulation while it would also be forced to bear any related loss through serving as the outlet for the excess 200 million Francs in risky silver coins. The separation of Belgian and Congolese economies was hence an illusion from the beginning.²⁴

Belgian colonialism has mostly been seen as a cooperative process between the Belgian colonial apparatus, the large companies running infrastructure, mining and plantation economies and the church, but the cooperation of key Congolese was indispensable to the colonial project.²⁵

When Belgium took over the reins a process of reducing the violence and increasing legitimacy was nonetheless initiated as well as a 'nationalisation' of the colonial apparatus. By 1920 this had come to consist mainly of Belgians rather than foreign mercenaries. As the humanitarian ideals of civilisation Leopold had falsely proclaimed also informed the Belgian colonial policies, the shift from economic exploitation to benevolent paternalism did not bring a complete change in the policies towards the mass of the Congolese. In relation to the running of the colonial economy and security the continued use of legally sanctioned forced labour for as much as 60 days per year or beyond²⁶, the taxes to be paid by individuals or families also increased and drafting for the colonial army of the *Force Publique* didn't assist in increasing the popularity of the colonial regime. However, by the mid-1920's an awareness of the need to look after the Congolese grew as fears of labour shortage kicked in due to epidemics. The colonial public health programme was hence linked to the need for workers to keep the colonial economy going rather than pure paternalist concern for those under Belgian 'trusteeship'. At home the colonial ideology was increasingly based on the concept of 'development' accordingly as an idea of management of the colonies by a professional elite increasingly using scientific methods in the name of 'development', 'progress' and the provision of 'impartial' adjudication of conflicts.²⁷

The corporations investing in Congo were instrumental for the colonial state in relation to control and budgets. With roots in the Leopoldian regime the colonial economy in Congo constituted only a few percent of the overall Belgian economy with the holding company *Société Générale*, both the key actor and beneficiary. The Congolese economy came to be run by a small and close-knit community. In 1937

24 Mambu ma Khenzu, Edouard (2006) pp.53-182

25 Pay, Ellen and Goyvaerts, Didier (2000) pp. 6-7

26 It is worth noting that the official records give no information on the number of hours peasants worked according to Likaka, Osumaka (1997) p. 29

27 Lemarchand, Rene (1964), pp. 55-74, Vansina, Jan (2010) pp. 178-222, Likaka, Osumaka (1997) pp. 3-139 and Young, Mervin Crawford (1988) pp. 1-31

only 28 people shared 400 board seats and also figured on the lists of ministerial cabinets or the colonial councils. Most of the companies under the *SG* umbrella were established in the first decade of the 20th century under Leopold, while most Belgian multinationals only began to invest from 1920 onwards. Most of these were somehow working for the *SG* that in turn was involved in most sectors of the colonial economy. Best known is the involvement in *Union Minière*, the company in charge of mining operations in the province of Katanga. The boom in colonial mining had begun from around 1920, somewhat later than in the copper belt further south and the gold mines of South Africa, as Leopold initially had focused on the extraction of rubber. Later Katanga became one of the biggest producers of copper, coltan and other metals. Massive relocations into the 100.000s to work in the mines followed. In the province of Kasai a corporate diamond industry and to some extent a plantation economy were developed and the railway taking the Katangese copper and coltan to the coast created a need for a labour force of tens of thousands until its completion in 1928. The Kivu and Orientale provinces became dominated by large-scale plantations and forced cash crop agriculture initially based on 15.000 households in 1918 that by 1952 had developed into 826.000. This caused the control of non-corporate land and hence the institutionalisation of ethnicity to become increasingly problematic in these provinces. Each type of economy changed the physical landscapes, the social settings as well as mental landscapes of the various regions with the various ethnic groups either adapting, seeking to resist or relocate. In Katanga, the mining workers, when pushed too hard, as in the early 1930's especially, resisted with small and individual means of working slowly for instance to collectively call for a strike and in some cases general strikes. Farmers in Kasai, Kivu and Orientale also did individual and often clandestine acts such as slowing down at work appearing as the stereotype 'lazy African'²⁸, left and turned to the forest or work in other provinces under false names as the administrative apparatus was not always able to follow up on their cases or at the collective level stage small scale revolts, all depending on gender, household composition and economic differentiation.²⁹

When Belgium took over Congo, the Catholic church was considered a guarantee of law and order able to keep the Africans humble and industrious and therefore allowed to become a colonial wide influence through both missions and the educational system, completely dwarfing and side lining the Protestant missions. Although Congolese were allowed to be trained as priests over the years, they were placed in inferior positions. The church also made itself resented among the religious movements and Muslim people, often amongst the large Nilotic group of peoples in the north east, for seeking to destroy their religion. The church was also responsible for schools and education from 1924 until 1954 when Belgian domestic political disagreements forced the educational system to be removed from the church auspices

28 For 1938 alone 59.000 convictions for breaking regulations were recorded. This number does not include customary jurisdiction numbers or collective actions. **Young, Mervin, Crawford** (1988) p. 16

29 **Abbeloos, Jan-Frederik**, 2008, pp. 105-127, **Buelens, Frank** (1994) pp. 139-156, **Fetter, Bruce** (1992) pp. 125-135, **Gorus, Jan** (2000) pp. 105-126, **Higginson, John** (1988) pp. 199-223, **Higginson, John** (1992) pp. 227-245, **Lemarchand, Rene** (1964) pp. 94-121, **Likaka, Osumaka** (1997) pp. 3-139, **Mommen, Andre** (1994) pp. 1-120, **Pay, Ellen and Goyvaerts, Didier** (2000) pp. 4-8, **Vansina, Jan** (2010) pp. 150-174 and **Vlassenroot, Koen** (2000) pp. 59-104

alone. The regional and local differences nonetheless also made themselves felt in the church as local and regional languages in Kasai, Orientale and Katanga were used in church and school. Moreover, the church lands that was granted by the colonial state also needed labour. As each mission was awarded 2 square kilometres and as there were close to 2.000 missions in the mid 1930's, the number of drafted workers for these lands could not have been small.³⁰

Despite the benefit of the myriad of different ethnic groups, peoples and languages as well as the weakening and in some cases destruction of existing social structures from the Leopoldian regime, the Belgian colonial policies required native cooperation. As the Belgian colonial administrators, native troops and European commanders in the *Force Publique* and European settlers never exceeded 250.000 at any one time, the colonial policies to some extent hinged on this. Initially many leaders on the Congolese side opted for the Belgian mode of indirect rule and took part when it was beneficial, when there was little choice or too much pressure. As of 1917 there were 6.095 recognised chieftains, by 1938 only 1.212. Some aspects of these salami tactics are known, while others remain unknown due to the lack of archives, archival access, no oral history mirroring the lack of knowledge of particular ethnic groups. The legal system was one sphere where this inclusion of the local elite showed. A growing numbers from other social groups came to be involved in the colonial project at various levels, making a living as paid workers employed by a large corporation or in lower vocational or administrative positions in the colonial administration. On the other hand, revolts, strikes and other means of protesting against recruitment and imprisonment of workers, forced labour in relation to road labour and mining surely also took place more often than reported in the various media outlets outside the colony.³¹ The effects of the depression showed this well as it was felt strongly, especially when companies fired workers and forced the remaining to work more and prizes dropped on the various plantation and cash crop products such as cotton, corn, palm oil and kernels. Strikes, revolts, religious revivals and boycotts against these conditions rather than anti-colonialism as such followed in the period from 1931 to 1936. Improvements came gradually mirroring the global economy and with the beginning of the war in 1939 Congo began to hum with activity. The production of war supplies was stepped up as in the rest of colonial Africa due to the Japanese takeover of south-east Asia. Although the Belgian parliament - and not only the colonial ministry - had been involved in colonial matters through the control of budgets already from 1908, there had been considerable leeway for the administrators, especially during the war having been cut off from Belgium.³²

Living conditions generally improved with the growing colonial economy after the war. It came about partly from a colonial bureaucratic elite feeling less certain on the Congolese as a lesser race and an

30 Pay, Ellen and Goyvaerts, Didier (2000) pp. 6-8 and Vansina, Jan (2010) pp. 122-139 and 288-292

31 Lemarchand, Rene (1964) pp. 2-8, Dembour, Marie-Bénédicte (2000) pp. 25-29, Mambu ma Khenzu, Edouard, 2006, pp. 6-7 and 99-144 and Young, Crawford (1994) p. 152.

32 Gibbs, David N. (1991) pp. 37-76, Higginson, John (1988) pp. 199-223 and Young, Crawford (1994) pp. 122, 161 and 184-185

extravaganza in social engineering in the form of a ten year plan from 1949. Some disliked what colonial modernity brought with it. The rural Kuba for instance were less interested in western clothing on the basis of their own clothes signifying their identities far stronger than for instance their language whereas the Luba and the Lulua gradually began embracing the clothing of the colonial modernity.³³

The American involvement in Belgian Congo reflected the picture around the world with British decline and rising American influence. Due to the American focus on free trade, anti-colonial discourse and conflicts with the French and British, the Belgians remained sceptical and nervous. The Americans were acutely aware of this and acted accordingly, something the Belgians took advantage of after the war. The transfer of the majority of the loans, all made in the name of Belgian Congo through the Bank of Reconstruction and Development Bank, the World Bank and commercial loans through a commercial bank in New York, was initiated following the end of the war. This would eventually force the Congolese national debt to rise to a level at independence a hundred times higher than it had been allowed under Belgian rule. When the profits from the Katangese copper industry that had become the largest producer of copper in the world were taken into consideration, the loans started to be looked upon with suspicion in Washington, London and Paris. However, the Americans didn't complain. Uranium from the Congolese mines had not only been used as the basis for the American nuclear weapons research as well as the nuclear bombs that were dropped on Japan, but also was to be provided to the Americans until 1956. Thereby the Belgians gained a stable and lengthy American political support for their colonial project as well as a steady and good income. With the increasing cold war focus of the Truman administration, along with the intensifying hunt for oil, pro-colonial policies also became the norm. Military aid to Belgium through the Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement from 1949 was also used with silent American consent to bolster the defence of the colony. This scheme failed to continue into the 1950's, however, as the Americans visiting the colony in 1950 found domestic disorders more likely than a Communist attack or supported rebellion and therefore advocated the program be terminated. The Americans, however, having become the main buyers of Congolese export goods and materials rather than the British, nonetheless came to include Belgian Congo as an anti-communist bastion along with the rest of southern Africa a few years into the early cold war.³⁴

Loosening the grip and the colonial snowball effect(s), 1952-1959

Gradually a general loosening up as well as intensification in the modernisation efforts was attempted in various aspects of colonial policies over the 1950's in Belgian Congo. External pressures, including the general changes in the colonial atmosphere in Africa since the return of the African soldiers that had fought for social systems they also began demanding for themselves and the elections in Ruanda-Urundi

33 Vansina, Jan (2010) pp. 161-175 and 230-235

34 Gibbs, David N. (1991) pp. 61-69, Helmreich, Jonathan E. (1986) pp. 3-261, Helmreich, Jonathan E. (1998) pp. 78-89, 108, 128-148, 152 and 173-217, Mambu ma Khenzu, Edouard (2006) p. 145-174 and Mommen (1994) pp. 60-120

in 1956, were influential, but not decisive. The processes in motion both in Belgium and the colony itself mattered more. In Belgium the opening debate on colonial policies mirrored the increasing split between the Flemish and Walloon communities, the change in government and the launch of a plan by the Belgian academic Van Bilsen in 1955 for Congolese independence by 1985. Within the colony mainly two things led to changes. First, Belgian attitudes at individual level in the ranks of colonial officials, especially amongst the overseers of the cotton production, had been changing. Second, amongst the various Congolese ethnic groups and social categories, both urban as well as rural, attention was being paid to the colonial presence in all aspects of life. Although Congo was vast, no other colonial state in Africa had as pervasive a reach as the Belgian state with its approximately 10.000 Belgian colonial officials in 1960.³⁵

Religious movements rooted in beliefs in ancestral cults, spiritual possessions and public healing sprang up or reappeared and were to some extent tolerated. Those competing with the Eurocentric religious and modern explanations as well as posing as obstacles to the spread of western medicine were sought restricted. Beginning with ABAKO in 1953, organisations and movements of a more political character were also allowed by the colonial authorities as independence was not yet on their agenda. These movements and organisations were, however, as much signs of the increasing inter-ethnic cleavages brought about by the complete reorganisation of life that the colonial economy and state had forced through in the rural areas as well as the urbanised areas. Belgian Congo covered more than 200 ethnic groups and in both Katanga and Kivu matters of land were at the centre of rising ethnic tension due to the colonial policies.³⁶

The use of the whip that had become legit by law in 1931 continued to be so until 1959, however within the cotton industry structural reforms, material incentives such as luxury household items and propaganda had also become increasingly important tools to keep up production from 1936 onwards. This was even more so in the 1950's with the focus on reducing punishments as well as raising efficiency by modern productivity thinking through increasing registration and evaluations. However, production needed more hands despite productivity achievements. The overall number of healthy adult males in the plantation workforce therefore increased from 19% in 1940 to 37% in 1957. In the Kivu, Katanga and Leopoldville provinces numbers were as high as 50% in 1956. Moreover, the special means to provide food for the peasants through small plots of land near their homes were turned into another means for the plantations to provide profit from cash crops over the 1950s. The 1957 global drop in prices also lead to dropping living standards and unemployment not only for the peasants, but especially for the mining and diamond workers. Many remembered when their employers had them work harder for less to increase or at least stabilise profits. Where discontent in the country side was

35 **Lemarchand, Rene** (1964) pp. 146-157, **Likaka, Osumaka** (1997) pp. 41-69, **Pay, Ellen and Goyvaerts, Didier**, (2000) pp. 6-8 and **Young, Crawford** (1994) p. 207

36 **Gorus, Jan** (2000) p.110, **Lemarchand, Rene** (1964) pp. 94-232 and **Vlassenroot, Koen** (2000) pp. 59-104

growing, the forest option remained. Amongst the workers in the urban centres where a lot of young frustrated men were living in workers' complexes, there were less options.³⁷

Feeling the winds of change internationally and seeing the British and the French gradually withdrawing from their colonies, the Belgians realised that they needed to coopt the American for investments and political support. Direct American investments were allowed to increase, although almost 90% of all investments in the Congo were still Belgian by 1955. Investments were also restricted to less strategically important sectors such as petrol distribution for consumption, regular banks as well as the distribution of personal vehicles and small scale investments such as in pine apple plantations and textile factories. A few decades previously investments had been made in the mining sector, but only a few, such as the Rockefeller family, were able to invest in the mining sector. Most investments were nonetheless both high profit and low risk operations promoting the Belgian colonial project.³⁸

Publicity campaigns with pamphlets, journal publications such as the journal 'Belgian Congo Today' and sponsored visits of trade missions to influence American public opinion as well business and political elites followed from the early 1950's. The main channel 'Belgian Congo Today' was made to look as if not published directly by the Belgian government nor officially promoting the opinions of it. However, articles in line with American public opinion on the business environment in Congo, segregation and race issues as well as interviews, public and written statements as well as downright propaganda by Belgian colonial ministers, foreign ministers and ambassadors to the UN give away the strong efforts to control discourse on the colony. In the spirit of 'scientific management', 'progress' and 'development' G. A. M. Vertommen, wrote:

*“It has been said that to colonise is to civilise and to educate, this is largely true, and just as educating children gets more and more delicate when they grow older, so colonising is fraught with increasing difficulties as the process goes on. (...) Will the Congolese people be thankful for what we have done for it, for the supression of slavery, the installation of order and peace, for improved means of transport, better farming methods, health and education, and for a thousand other things which make life more humane and agreeable?”*³⁹

The launch of the ten year plan in 1950, the reconfiguration of the education system from 1954, the construction of new apartment complexes for workers and the establishment of the two colonial universities in the mid 1950's to garner support amongst a small Congolese elite of 'developed', the *évoluées*, were all means aimed at modernising the colonial infrastructure, economy as well as the

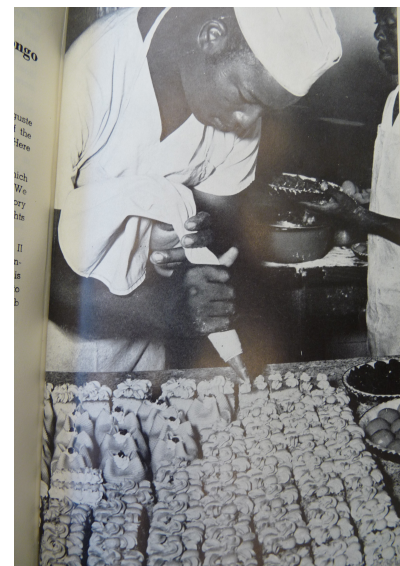
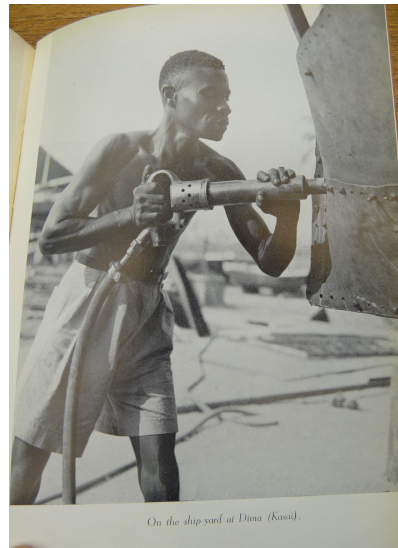
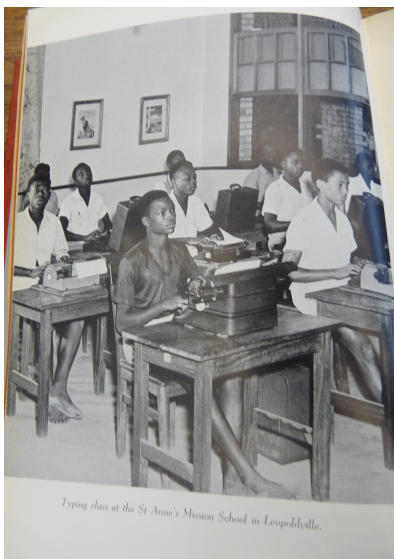
37 Likaka, Osumaka (1997) pp. 23-114 and Lemarchand, Rene pp. 146-157

38 Gibbs, David N. (1991) pp. 66-69

39 Belgian Congo Today, Centre de d'information et documentation du Congo-Belge et Ruanda- Urundi, April 1952, p. 69

colonial subjects.⁴⁰ In relation to independence in 1960, only approximately 2.000 had attained their *Mérite Civique* or *Immatriculés* however.⁴¹

At the world exhibition in Brussels in 1958 the Belgians sought to promote the old civilisation narrative as modernisation at a time, as Kevin Dunn has pointed out, where the other European colonial powers were pulling out.⁴² However, the same year the Belgian foreign minister Pierre Wigny was given American support by the Secretary of State with the argument that not all people were 'ready' for independence.⁴³ Below, photographic 'evidence' of the 'progress' of Congolese as they learn to type, drive, work, cook, dress and follow the arts as 'we' do in the 'West' as promoted to the American audiences by their proud Belgian civilisers.⁴⁴



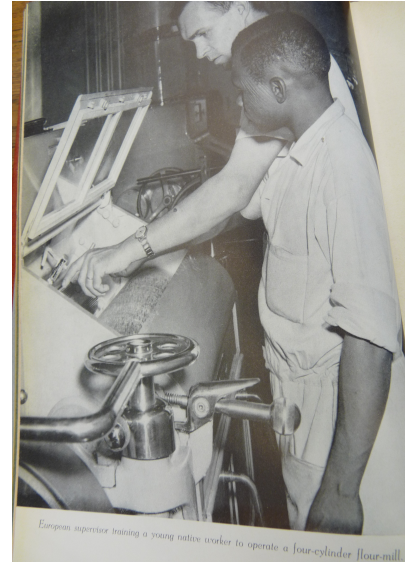
40 See for instance *Belgian Congo Today*, Centre de d'information et documentation du Congo-Belge et Ruanda-Urundi, June 1954, p. 85

41 Lemarchand, Rene (1964) pp. 146-157 and Vansina, Jan (2010) pp. 174--252

42 Dunn, Kevin C. (2003) p. 67

43 FRUS 1958-1960 Vol. XIV Africa. Memcon Dulles and Wigny, 8/19/1958

44 The 15 photos have been found *Belgian Congo Today*, Centre de d'information et documentation du Congo-Belge et Ruanda-Urundi, vol 1.-6, 1952-1957



As of January 1959 when riots broke out in Leopoldville on the backdrop of generally worsening conditions since the downturn in the global economy in 1957, things changed. General unrest was lurking underneath the surface and tensions between the Lulua and Lunda, forged by Belgian colonial rule, also transformed into violence that lasted months and claimed numerous lives. The Belgians were realising that the price of retaining their colony would eventually be higher than they were willing to pay. The snowball was rolling, and fast.⁴⁵

An insufficient fig leaf: Congolese independence, 1960

In October 1959 the Belgian colonial minister Maurice Van Hemelrijk decided upon a preparatory period of 4 years, but events and processes set in motion destroyed the Belgian attempt to keep the reform process under control and independence was pushed to June 30th 1960 under the government led by the first elected and Congolese Prime and *MNC* leader Minister Patrice Lumumba. Big Belgian business got busy trying:

⁴⁵ Kent, John (2010) pp. 7-15

”(...) to ensure that decolonisation would not remove their ability to pursue their economic activities within the new state without sacrificing any significant advantages that the old Belgian Congo state had provided for them”.⁴⁶

Moreover, the settlers in Katanga wanted a union with the Central African Federation and the corporations in Katanga wanted to secede in March 1960. Roy Welensky of the Central African Federation had been in contact with the president of the *Union Minière* and the vice governor of *Société Générale* at this point where also capital transfers from Congo to Belgium peaked. In one week in March 1959 six hundred million francs were transferred to Belgium. Restrictions for personal accounts had to be introduced at end of the month. A significant corporate restructuring followed. A third of the holdings of the *Comité Spécial du Katanga*, the umbrella corporation of Belgian colonial corporations, were transferred to the private *Compagnie Katanga* while the remaining two thirds, momentarily remaining in Belgian custody, would become Congolese.⁴⁷

Following independence, Belgium sent both diplomats and security agents to seek out coup partners and destabilise Congo, funded a campaign worth 50 million Belgian Francs against Lumumba and sought an alliance with corporate forces in Katanga to force a confederation.⁴⁸ Soon after independence in June 1960, the far too low number of university educated administrators, the divided military force hitherto used to keep the colony under control and the ill-prepared Lumumba government had their challenge set for them. The Belgian attempts of promoting various civilisation and development discourses has been called 'under-development' by Jan Vansina and Juhani Koponen's concept of 'development for exploitation' also springs to mind.⁴⁹ The state inherited by those that became Congolese citizens, was not designed as a 'dependent appendage' as Crawford Young has called the African colonial states⁵⁰, but foremost along the lines of a business that was to bring profits to the Belgian corporations and secondarily give pride and unity to an otherwise divided country.⁵¹ The heritage of the Congolese from the Belgians qualifies for Basil Davidson's notion of the 'Black Man's Burden'.⁵² Within a few months Congo was ravaging in civil war with the UN looking after Western interests⁵³ as well having its first prime minister, Patrice Lumumba assassinated under the gaze of the UN troops through the long reach of former colonial masters.⁵⁴

46 Kent, John (2010) pp. 3

47 Kent, John (2010) pp. 3-11

48 Parliamentary Committee of enquiry in charge of determining the exact circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the possible involvement of Belgian Politicians: "Conclusions", 2001, pp. 3-4 (located on http://www.lachambre.be/kvvcr/pdf_sections/comm/lmb/conclusions.pdf, last checked 19/03/2011)

49 Vansina, Jan (2010) pp. 243 and 272 and Koponen, Juhani (1995)

50 Young, Crawford (1994) p. 17

51 Dunn, Kevin C. (2003) p. 62

52 Davidson, Basil (1992) pp. 197-242

53 Kent, John (2010) pp. 188-202

54 De Witte, Ludo (2001) pp. 1-185

Denmark and Belgian Colonialism

A 'joint venture' takes over the Danish discursive space on Congo, 1949-1958

Until the late 1940's, Belgian Congo in the Danish discursive space had remained within the overall discourse on Africa south of the Sahara. It had also been a distinctive colonial entity defined by the manifestations of Western popular culture, what can be seen as a sympathy towards the project of a fellow small state and the Danish novels by people with experience in the Belgian colony. This group of men got older with the years and naturally ceased to publish and eventually passed away. Viggo Jungsboell who also published a handful of articles over the 1950's in local newspapers was the last to publish in 1960.⁵⁵ That he began writing newspaper articles also marked a shift in the discursive space on Belgian Congo in Denmark from discourses dominated by the publications and memories of the Danes that had been part of the Belgian colonial project to discourses dominated partly by the remains of their personal experiences and partly of newspaper journalists writing about and essentially promoting the development colonialism of Belgium.

The gradual move towards this 'joint venture' began in 1948 when C. C. Andersen, an editor from the tabloid *Ekstrabladet*, contacted the Belgian colonial ministry to ask for travel assistance. Andersen sought to lure the Belgians with the fact that the newspaper he worked for was the largest Scandinavian evening newspaper and that he was aiming for radio broadcasts also. His request was communicated to Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Spaak and the Belgian ambassador to Denmark that must have agreed to his request. The Belgian Ambassador reported back to Spaak to inform him that Andersen had reported favourably on Belgium.⁵⁶ However, the coordinated efforts to influence the public Danish discursive space were probably initiated in 1952 when 'Belgian Congo Today' also began to be published and Gunnar Buchwald, an editor of *Berlingske Tidende*, requested the assistance of the Belgian Ambassador for his trip to Congo towards the end of the year. The ambassador's contact in the Directory for Cultural Relations and Information within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs then contacted the Head of the Press Agency within the Belgian Colonial Ministry to emphasise the importance of letting Buchwald travel to Congo with Belgian support and recommended that he be given free transport within Congo on SABENA, the national Belgian air line carrier. Moreover, it was noted that this moment was opportune to seek to influence public opinion as the Danes seemed at a crossroad on the colonial question.⁵⁷

55 **Jungsboell, Viggo**, Roskilde Dagblad, 24/12/1953, Østsjællands Folkeblad", 24/09/1958, Vejle amts folkeblad, 26/06/1959, Østsjællands Folkeblad", 16/12/1959 and (1960)

56 C. C. Andersen to the Belgian Colonial Minister, 18/11/1948 in BFM/DA: Belgian Foreign Ministry, Diplomatic Archives, Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark, the Inspector General of the General Directorate of the Political Section to Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Spaak and the Belgian Ambassador to Denmark, 04/12/194 in BFM/DA: Belgian Foreign Ministry, Diplomatic Archives, Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark and The Belgian Ambassador to Denmark to , Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Spaak, 08/07/1949 in BFM/DA: Belgian Foreign Ministry, Diplomatic Archives, Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark

57 Van Bellinghen in the Directory for Cultural Relations and Information within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the

In 1956 Edvard Andersen, a journalist and editor at *Politiken*, sent a letter to the liberal Belgian colonial minister, Auguste Buisseret, who had just taken office. Andersen presented himself as fascinated by Belgian Congo and full of respect for the work done by the Belgians there. He briefly mentioned his several articles in both *Politiken* and local newspapers based on his visit to Congo in 1954 and the joint radio and TV shows he had done the with chairman of the Danish-Belgian society. His intention was to get Buisseret's comments for 18 questions on the Belgian Colony related to social, economic and political matters for the book he was aiming at publishing close to the 50th anniversary of the Belgians in Congo the following year. Some questions dealt with the penal system and what was in fact segregation, but most questions were less dangerous and underpinned by a pro-colonial sentiment speaking of 'Mulatto problems', the progress with regard to developed and intelligent natives and the lack of Mau Mau 'tendencies'.⁵⁸ The Colonial Minister was eventually recommended to grant Andersen his support on the grounds of Andersen's favourable reporting in 1954 and that the views of the newspaper he was working for, were represented in the Danish government by the social liberals and therefore important to seek to influence.⁵⁹

With a series of articles '*With SABENA in Belgian Congo*' in spring 1956 the popular journal *Se og Hør* also took part in the Belgian PR campaign. The stories were on Danish music in the pre-historic forests, the white urban life with swimming pools, clubs and Congolese house assistants as experienced by Danes living in the colony and finally, probably as an agreed upon 'sign of gratitude' towards SABENA and Belgium that probably footed the airline costs, promoted the discourse of a peaceful Congo without a Mau Mai type violence and development instead.⁶⁰

Another aspect of the Belgian PR campaign was the colonial exhibition that travelled West Germany and Scandinavia, all parts of Western Europe without colonies, arriving in Denmark in November 1957. The three articles from 1957 made reference to in the following came in extension of this exhibition. Without doubt in relation to the exhibition, the Belgian Colonial Minister was in late August suggested to invite Povl Westphall from the conservative *Berlingske Tidende* to Congo so that his articles could appear around the time of the exhibition. The proposal came from Gaston Heenen, a former colonial minister with administrative experiences from both Katanga and Belgian Congo in 1920's, who appeared to be in charge of the Tourist directorate within the colonial ministry and hence most certainly aware of the hundreds of Danes that had served the colonial regime.⁶¹ However, without further

Head of the Press Agency within the Colonial Ministry, 24/12/1952 in BFM/DA: Belgian Foreign Ministry, Diplomatic Archives, Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark

58 Edvard Andersen to Auguste Buisseret, Minister of the Colonies, 08/05/1956 in Archives Diplomatique, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AF/T/37/4/EXPO-DK, 1954-1960

59 The General Administrator of the Colonies, Abele, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 26/10/1956 in Archives Diplomatique, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AF/T/37/4/EXPO-DK, 1954-1960 and The Belgian Ambassador to Denmark to Auguste Buisseret, Minister of the Colonies, 21/11/1956, in Archives Diplomatique, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AF/T/37/4/EXPO-DK, 1954-1960

60 Eriksen, Sigurd (1956a) Eriksen, Sigurd (1956b), Eriksen, Sigurd (1956c) and Eriksen, Sigurd (1956d) 01/02

61 Gaston Heenen to Auguste Buisseret, Minister of Colonies, 21/08/1957, in Archives Diplomatique, S.P.F. Affaires

documents on these matters it is difficult to be completely certain if an actual plan was made, but within the period from 1949 to 1957 several articles including those by the aforementioned journalists were published by both younger journalists and some of the editors from the larger newspapers in each others newspapers in what appears to be a long term Belgian PR campaign for its colonial project. From the articles themselves it is not entirely clear if the authors were granted the same or some of privileges that were held out in prospect for Buchwald in 1952. However, the articles were all very favourable towards the Belgian colonial project. The need for the firm, but just Belgian approach in Congo was seen as bringing both spiritual and material progress and therefore in the interest of the natives, who were often referred to as primitives, not always sure of their own interests.⁶²

The Belgians were probably seeking means to influence the Danish public opinion through the journalists on the basis of a recognition that the benefits of the Danish novels written by people that had internalised their colonial project had to be replaced if Belgium was to have Danish support. The colonial exhibition coordinator was well aware of the Danish connections to the earlier years of the Belgian colonial history and wanted to include a homage to these connections and to link these efforts with the current Belgian colonial policies as well as promote products from the colony.⁶³ The promotion of Congolese products may have played a significant role as Congo was hit by the 1957 decrease in raw material prices, copper especially. Delegates were also sent from Brussels from a special task force, *Inforcongo*, to provide assistance to the Danish business men that would show up. The coordinating body, the *Office de l'Information et des Relations Publiques pour le Congo Belge et le Ruanda-Urundi*, behind 'Belgian Congo Today', published a two page article about the exhibition in early 1958 and claimed it one of the more successful of its kind. The article shared the expected story of success with 85.000 Danes including 10.000 school children visiting the exhibition.⁶⁴ Danish business men were interested in establishing contacts, import of Congolese wood was especially interesting. The two visits of the coming queen and cousin to the Belgian King, Princess Margaret, were the final touches. Moreover, 15.000 documents, brochures and folders were handed out for promotion. There is no doubt that this arrangement was of great importance for the discourse on Belgian Congo but also on trade as will be discussed in the next part. With regard to public discourse the article reads as follows:

étrangères, AF/T/37/4/EXPO-DK, 1954-1960

62 **Andersen, C. C.** (1949a), **Andersen, C. C.** (1949b), **Andersen, C. C.** (1949c), **Andersen, Edvard**, (1954a), **Andersen, Edvard** (1954b), **Hultberg, Helge**, Information 11/11/1957, **Hultberg, Helge**, Information, 11/11/1957, **Lembourn, Hans Jørgen**, Aarhus Stiftstidende, 03/03/1955, **Sørensen, Andreas**, Berlingske Tidende, 18/08/1956, **Sørensen, Andreas**, Berlingske Tidende 21/10/1956, and **Westphall, Povl**, Berlingske Tidende, 8 + 12/12/1957

63 William Ugeux of the *Office de l'Information et des Relations Publiques pour le Congo Belge et le Ruanda-Urundi* to The Colonial Councillor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grojean, 03/04/1957 in Archives Diplomatique, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AF/T/37/4/EXPO-DK, 1954-1960 and William Ugeux of the *Office de l'Information et des Relations Publiques pour le Congo Belge et le Ruanda-Urundi* to Delvaux de Fenffe, The General Director of the Political Section at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 10/04/1957 in Archives Diplomatique, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AF/T/37/4/EXPO-DK, 1954-1960

64 Belgian Congo Today, no. 1 1958, pp. 24-26

“Many Danes, while approving much of the criticism which is being voiced at the U.N. against colonial powers, do not think that the Belgian effort in Africa deserves that criticism. In their view, the Belgians are really striving to build a Belgo-Congolese community, in which Europeans and Africans will be associated on equal terms, with no colour curtain to create an artificial barrier between the two races. The Danes judge the Belgians according to the remarkable things they have already achieved in Africa. As much as remains to be done in the backward areas of Central Africa, the Danes regard the Belgian presence there as still necessary and fully justified.”

The impact on public discourse was probably a higher degree of favour towards Belgium and its colonial project than 'usually' and in comparison to the British, French and Portuguese. The re-telling of the Danish-Congolese narrative of the Danish 'pioneers' appears to have been an integral element in this.

The aforementioned Edvard Andersen had his book published just after the Belgian exhibit of public diplomacy had taken place. It was the typical travel account taking the reader 'deeper and deeper' into the 'heart of Africa'. Initially Andersen was fascinated and scared by the almost mythic lands and its people although his exchanges with 'the blacks' only took place with white (sometimes Danish) middlemen. Gradually he moved past the initial colonialist discourse of economic progress and civilising mission. He accordingly began to question the rough tone sometimes used by the whites, came to respect the locals he began to describe as individuals using their own names and to finally question the overall discourse of (the Belgian colonial) modernity forced upon the population. A Danish doctor in the Kasai province also told him about local medicine. Sometimes it caused problems, but there were also cases where local knowledge improving and curing diseases and conditions. Upon his visit to the Kamina base, however, there was hesitation in his narrative as he was forced by the base commander to place it in relation to the 1956 Suez crisis and the cold war. After seeing some of the problems the mining industry was causing, he once again got doubts and even asked the question whether or not civilisation had not just placed the natives in another form of slavery as slaves of money. His conclusion, however, was that the Belgians had done a better job than any other colonial power.⁶⁵

In 1952 the travel writer Jørgen Bitsch to some extent opened up the discourse on 'the African' and 'the Congolese', at least the pygmies of Belgian Congo were granted both agency and respect, but it probably had little effect on the overall discourse.⁶⁶ A Congolese pastor, Jean Mij, had also visited Bornholm in 1956, a year after the Danish missionary Bræstrup had passed away.⁶⁷ He may have convinced people of his own worth, but probably also that of Belgian development colonialism as he was probably considered a product thereof, a 'developed' Congolese. Despite these small openings, Belgian Congo

65 Andersen, Edvard (1957) pp. 7-252

66 Bitsch, Jørgen (1952) pp. 77-106

67 Karlsen, Finn Bræstrup (2003) p. 167

probably still stood out as a the better example of European colonialism due to the strong component of development in line with modernisation theory and the growing criticism of the other European colonial powers. In his book from 1958, Erik W. Nielsen, a Priest with the Danish Missionary Society, did see Belgian colonialism less concerned with preparing independent states as the British or a union with the *metropole* as the French, but also displaying less signs of nationalism due to the focus on living standards and economic development. Portuguese colonialism was, as he put it, a chapter of its own.⁶⁸

'Africa' in the Danish public sphere, 1900-1960

From Herodotus onwards Africa south of Sahara existed as an idea or even a paradigm of difference in the 'West' as *Aethiopia*, *Nigritia* and now *Africa*. Africa and its peoples became the mirror of all stereotypes accumulated through five centuries of European explorations around the world. Both the continent and its peoples were assigned natural features, cultural characteristics and values that made 'Africa' stand out as radically different to Europe the foremost but also Asia. The attempt of the European knowledge convention(s) to absorb these cultural encounters over time came to be one misunderstanding after the other.⁶⁹ The ideas of African peoples as 'tribes' and nations came from the exploring and colonising countries as their sailors left a world where nationality mattered greatly and used the same reference system to categorise the Africans they encountered. For the most part, however, they were merely 'Africans'.⁷⁰ The quote below illustrates the dominant discourse in 1915:

*"Middle and Southern Africa still, however, rest on the same Barbaric Level as was the case thousands of years ago. Amongst the Negro peoples not one has succeeded in bringing about an independent culture, and the Negroes must therefore - with regard to intellectual abilities - be ranked below the Indians that despite being even more isolated can show high ranking civilisations as the Aztec in Mexico and the Incas in Peru. (...)"*⁷¹

This is the backdrop against which to look at the Danish public images of both 'Africa', Belgian Congo and not least Belgian colonialism. The distinction between the different African colonies often appear less consequent in the Danish public, yet distinctions were made, but not as much between the colonial areas by name as often as between the European colonial power holding it. That makes both Belgian Congo Belgian and therefore to some extent separate from 'Africa', although 'Africa' as an overall paradigm of difference needs to be kept in mind.

The discourses on 'Africa' were accordingly promoted through not only the educational system, but fiction as well as non-fiction literature and popular journals as *Illustreret Familiejournal* and *Illustreret*

68 Nielsen, Erik W (1958) pp. 8-12

69 Mudimbe, Valentine (1994) pp. xi.-187

70 Wright, Donald R. (1999) pp. 409-426

71 Part of the text on "Africa" in Salmonsens Konversationsleksikon 1915, pp. 256-257 (Same text as in 1893!)

Familieblad over the period from 1900-1914. Generally Africa and Africans were of little interest. 'Africa' often merely served as a setting without any connections to reality in fiction publications, both Danish and from abroad. Africa was of minor interest in the school books for the courses of history and geography and presented as a less developed place. The books in general reflected their time promoting imperialism and ethnocentrism. In the popular journals short background stories, cartoons and travel accounts relayed Africa to the readers. In the same years the daily press mainly brought stories on Africa around 1905 when the Germans waged gruesome campaigns against the Herero, Nama and the Maji rebellion in their two African territories as well as the case made against the Leopoldian regime in the Congo Free State and its horrors there. The sources were in the cases of the German campaigns German and partly official and in the case of the Leopoldian regime mostly from the British Congo Reform Association. The conservative papers were the least critical and the social democratic paper the most, although in each case it was clear that the focus was on the European perspective. In the case of the Congo Free State atrocities, most claims were even marginalised or similar claims were made of the other colonies.⁷² For the entire period from 1924 to 1945 the focus on African news in the daily newspapers seem to mirror the popular journals in the sense of the general low relevance assigned to Africa insofar the annual publication of the most important events in headline form from each day can be understood as showing this. Granted, news stories from Africa were logically not amongst the most important ones considering the general European, Baltic and Atlantic focus of Danish politics and economics, but in the cases of events in African countries coming up, the stories were most often within colonial frameworks.⁷³

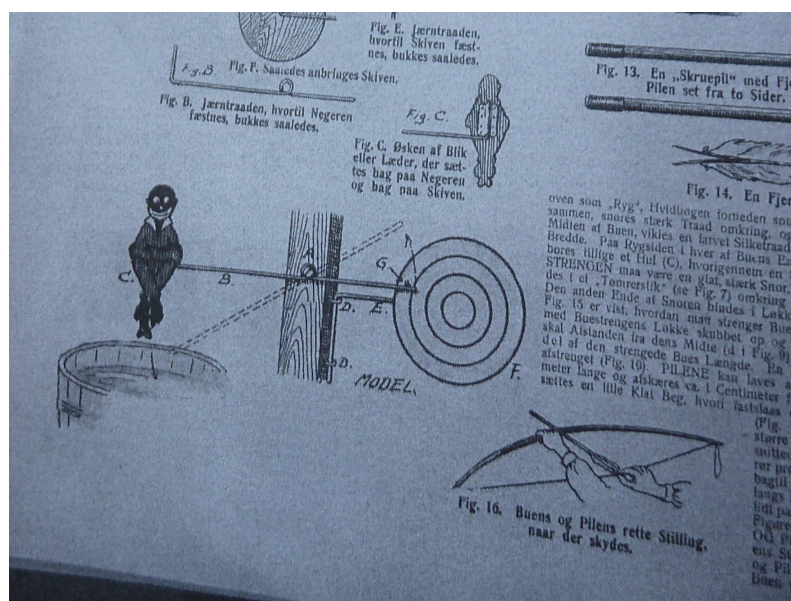
Outside academia and the daily press with its focus on news, popular culture in form of writers of fiction and song writers followed suit with regard to the promotion of the stereotypes of the African and 'the Negro'. The American jazz artists visiting Denmark in the 1930's were therefore almost as puzzling to the Danes as the West Indians that had been put on display in Tivoli, the largest amusement park in Copenhagen, in 1905. Both newspapers and popular journals with its Orientalist turn over the second half of the nineteenth century were also suited to join in.⁷⁴ In 1920 several of the articles in the journal *Illustreret Familiejournel* serve as a good indicator of the popular press in general as to how Africans were seen as a singular group that all more or less walked around in pre-historic forests waiting to be brought civilisation and education by the Europeans and how when they encountered civilised whites, were unable to use their gifts as the drawing of an African woman below shows. Graphic jokes on how the bast fibre skirts of them could be utilised as an umbrella, as a parachute or as a boat by the white explorers when in emergencies all while still being attached to the African wearer were also part of the journal's discourse on Africa. On the other hand one could find volumes with the front cover filled with fascination of African nature. Most telling, however, was a full page article that is partly shown in the

72 Andersen, Niels Christian (1976) pp. 26-144

73 Egypt, the South African Union and on and off also Abyssinia were the only exceptions. *Avisårbogen* 1924-1945

74 Duedahl, Poul (2007) p. 124 and Zerlang, Martin (1997) pp. 100-103

second photo below. One could cut out the 'Negro' figure, and follow the design in order to end up with Sunday past time in the form of a primitive semi-mechanical device where the 'Negro' would dipped in the water when the arrows hit the target.⁷⁵



A decade later it seemed as if the readers of *Illustreret Familiejournal* were becoming interested in the rest of the world. A journalist had been hired especially to send home travel reports from India for most of 1930. Stories of Chinese pirates were also brought. With regard to Africa differentiation was now to some extent the norm between bush men, Tuareg in the Sahara and Zimbabwe. However, there was still a big gap between the 'Negroes' to white civilisation. The large fortress like structures in Zimbabwe could hence only have been built by the Hamitic King Salomon and the language of the bush men were akin to the screams of baboons. The interpreter in the story of the bush men was also referred to as 'Kaffir', the parallel to the derogatory word 'nigger', by the presumably British or Afrikaaner original author of the article. There was, however, one case of giving some credit to a 'Negro' with the Emperor of Haiti, Henri Christopher, although depicted as half genius and half savage.⁷⁶ The external influence in *Illustreret Familiejournal* in relation to the image of 'Africa' had mainly come from Great Britain and its imperial cultural influence. Over the 1930's and especially the early 1940's Africa was less and less mentioned in at least *Illustreret Familiejournal* with the future of Europe growing darker and darker. During the last years of the occupation of Denmark by Germany *Det Ny Radio Blad*, another popular journal, mirrored *Illustreret Familiejournal*. In both 1944 and 1945 the US as well as Great Britain, and France to some extent, therefore dominated the international input in the journals with 'Africa' almost completely absent.⁷⁷

75 *Illustreret Familiejournal* no. 2 1920, pp. 10-11, no. 33 1920 frontpage, no. 34 1920 frontpage, no. 43 1920, p. 28 and no. 47 1920, p. 24. The photos come from no. 2 1920 p. 10 and no. 43 1920, p. 28.

76 *Illustreret Familiejournal* no. 1 1930, no. 3-21 1930, no. 27-28 1930, no. 32 1930 and no. 39 1930

77 *Illustreret Familiejournal* no. 12, 13, 30, 45 and 52 1934, no. 17 and 18 1935 and no. 45 1940, *Det Ny Radioblad* no.

As for the legitimacy of European colonialism in the Danish public, criticism against certain colonial matters were part of the picture as in the case of the Leopoldian colonial regime, but it seems that there were no solid and persistent mainstream criticism as to the overall idea, motivation and actual colonial projects until the late 1940's and early 1950's. Beyond lacking an understanding it was probably a reflection of the influences from the European imperial cults with imperial public holidays, youth literature, exhibitions and school curricula⁷⁸, international *realpolitik*, the influence of the three islands in the West Indies Denmark had sold to the US in 1916 after centuries and Greenland as an actual colony until 1953 as well as the discourses on the African Other and corresponding self images. Danish voting at the UN were also cast in favour of pro-colonial measures until 1959 when considerations of the newly independent states became influential along with public diplomacy.⁷⁹

The Danish voices from Congo and Western popular culture, 1900-1948

In 2004 the aforementioned Danish journalist Peter Tygesen made the point that Belgian Congo was probably the best known country by the Danes in a newspaper article making reference to thousands of newspaper articles in the local and national daily papers, the display of the items the Danes that had served as mercenaries, sailors, administrators and so on for both the Leopoldian colonial regime as well as the Belgian colonial state had brought home and their public lectures on their experiences.⁸⁰ Given it is near impossible to ascertain the cognitive Africa maps of all Danes that lived in the period as such and the time it would take to sift through all relevant journal and newspapers to assess every word uttered on Congo, I have no intention of establishing whether Tygesen is correct or not. However, I do agree with him in as far as the canals for influence with regard to Belgian Congo compared to the French or even British colonies were probably more direct, numerous, accessible and easier to relate to for the Danes with as many as 400-500 Danes estimated to have been in the Leopoldian and Belgian colonial services. As pointed out in the booklet tied to the Nordic Congo exhibition from 2006-2007, more than 10.000 people in the Nordic countries are estimated to have been influenced directly by eye witness accounts and fictional stories of the Scandinavians that took part in the Leopoldian and Belgian colonial projects and ethnographic displays of the approximately 32.000 artefacts they brought home.⁸¹ As Marianne Rostgaard and Lotte Schou have pointed out, the Danes that went to Congo from 1885 onwards, all probably went with a simplistic cognitive map of Africa and Congo as lesser developed shaped by the popular stories by Stanley and Livingstone because of their publicity.⁸² Not much knowledge has been accumulated on the perhaps twenty Danish missionaries that went to Congo. Presumably they wanted to

9 and 23, 1944 og Det Ny Radioblad no. 12 and 25, 1945, **Grodal, Torben Kragh** (1997) pp. 219-244 and **Schou, Søren** (1997) pp. 308-324

78 **Stanard, Matthew G.** (2009)

79 **Midtgaard, Kristine** (2005) pp. 165-195 and 234-270

80 **Tygesen, Peter** (2004)

81 **Tygesen, Peter og Wæhle, Espen** (2006) pp. 86-88

82 **Rostgaard, Marianne and Schou, Lotte** (2010) pp. 159-161

bring the messages of the bible as well as European civilisation, although they only did so through Swedish, British and American missions from 1878 onwards.⁸³ It is therefore probably safe to assume that similar ideas informed the broader public with regard to Belgian Congo and even more so when the first Danish book with experiences from Congo was published.⁸⁴

The criticism of the Congo reform movement led by the British Edmund Morel, however, also to some extent informed the image of Belgian Congo. While an estimated 400-500 Danes had worked in Congo, at least one from Faeroe islands still under Danish sovereignty at this time, Ludvig Daniel Jacob Danielsen, had joined the ranks of the Congo reform movement and had some articles in Danish published in the Faeroese press speaking against the barbaric exploitations of the Leopoldian regime.⁸⁵ Johan Støckel, a Danish officer, had voiced his own thoughts in the same direction and at the same time claimed that money was owed to him by the colonial umbrella corporation in Katanga, but ended up as a bitter man with less money than hoped for and his personal honour in tatters due to allegations of mental instability.⁸⁶ The criticism of the Leopoldian regime also made its way to Denmark and led H. Jenssen-Tusch, whose brother had served in Congo, to write a two volume book that was intended as a defence of the Leopoldian efforts in Congo. However, Frits Andersen, a Danish literary historian, has pointed out that the book reads more like obituary of the Congo Free State than a defence. Moreover, he found it full of contradictions portraying both noble, wise and beautiful savages as well as degenerate and lost peoples living in caves and without any societal order. Andersen also traced this duality in other works on Congo indicating that people were revising their images of the people they encountered in Congo, or in Jenssen-Tusch's case heard about, although with some difficulties.⁸⁷

It took some years before the criticism began to fade into the background following the Belgian take over of the Congo Free State and the international acceptance of it. In 1918 the American Edgar Rice Burroughs therefore had little problems promoting British colonialism as moral and just at the expense of the Belgian bureaucratic and cruel colonisers a story of Tarzan that partly took place in Congo.⁸⁸ Nationality and personal experiences were of importance, as Jürgen Jürgensen, a Dane with experience in Congo from 1898 to 1906, on the other hand had several books and novels published between 1909 and 1936, some reprinted and published in both Denmark and Germany, and was strongly favoured by Belgium more than three decades after his service to the Congo Free state had ended. Correspondence from the Belgian envoy in Denmark and internal correspondence from the Belgian Ministry of the Colonies shows that it was suggested that Jürgensen, who was both awarded a commemorative medal many years after his service had ended and was to be given an unequalled status by getting the chance to

83 **Karlsen, Finn Bræstrup** (2003) pp. 155-167, **Knudsen, Ann Vibeke and Hansen, Sanne Steenberg** (2003) pp. 149-153 and **Kudsk, Finn** (2003) p. 142

84 **Martini, Chr. and Schjønberg, Chr.** (1890)

85 **Jacobsen, Òli** (2010) pp. 177-183

86 **Knudsen, Ann Vibeke** (2003) p. 47

87 **Andersen, Frits**, 2010, pp. 469-472

88 *Op cit*, p. 570

get a temporary allowance when he needed it despite not living up to two separate sets of regulations on pensions for service in Congo.⁸⁹

Regardless what might have been the public image of Belgian colonialism until 1920, the peoples of the Belgian colony were still promoted in the same stereotypical way. In the aforementioned popular journal, *Illustreret Familiejournel*, three photos and their texts allowed the Danish readers to view what were described as primitive pygmies from the deep pre-historic forests of Belgian Congo in 1920. They were described as backwards as they apparently had no names, although they were given credit for being fearsome. In another edition of the journal a cartoon was brought, bringing a constructed story of the time when 'King Wullawappa' of the Upper Congo wanted to control the animals. The Congolese of Upper Congo, as they were specifically mentioned as coming from, were completely black skinned with enormous and fat lips like monkeys and all revealing a total fear of the animals as can be seen on the photo below.⁹⁰ Despite the differentiation between Belgian Congo and Upper Congo, the counter image of the Congolese, or African for that matter, was the same.



An English book, *Tom i Kongo*, was also translated into Danish in 1920 and reprinted at least three times over the following years. Although the narrative was sustained by fictional stories of British soldiers on

⁸⁹ Belgian Envoy in Denmark to the Colonial Counsellor in the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, 03/03/1938 in BFM/DA: Belgian Foreign Ministry, Diplomatic Archives, Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danmark and Letter from the Colonial Ministry's Personnel Service to the Colonial Counsellor in the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, 12/03/1938, in BFM/DA: Belgian Foreign Ministry, Diplomatic Archives, Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danmark

⁹⁰ *Illustreret Familiejournel* no. 15, 1920 p.34 and *Illustreret Familiejournel* no. 41, 1920, p. 10 (The cartoon is from no. 15)

campaigns in what became the eastern corner of Congo, the promoted stereotypes of the Africans were the typical ones.⁹¹ Also in 1920, Anna Augusta Florida went with her husband, J. M. H. Floridan, an officer, to Belgian Congo. Reading her diary notes and letters to her family, published by her daughter and great grand child, the discourses of the Africa and Congo and its peoples, one realises, were as strong as they were simplistic. 'Africa' and Congo at this point were both the same and far away and intimidating prior to her and her husband's departure. As they arrived in Antwerp her reaction when she saw Africans the first time in her life was fear. On the boat on the Atlantic she calmed down again listening to the stories of the other travellers with experience in the colony. The Spanish they encountered on Tenerife were interestingly portrayed as darkish indicating some aspects of a racial hierarchy. When seeing Africa for the first time near Dakar in French West Africa, she admitted to feeling disappointed having expected lions everywhere and instead seeing big mountains and long forest ranges in her first encounter with African spatial reality. At this point she was still removed from the Africans and therefore at relative ease. When she was given an Congolese 'boy' at a dinner with the Danish commander of the *Force Publique*, Valdemar Olsen, she was less at ease, in charge of a little 'Negro' as black as coal as she phrased it. Upon their arrival in their final destination and the African and Congolese reality came close, she once again became frightened of all the new and incomprehensible people, languages, aspects of nature as everything was challenging her knowledge and senses until she had adapted. It seems not to be too far fetched to argue that her cognitive map of both Africa, Congo and the Congolese to be very much alike the popular discourses on Africa in their purest form.⁹²

With the conclusion of the war in 1918 Belgium needed to find new markets for its industrial products and Denmark was always interested in selling more agricultural produce, thus Belgium and Denmark gradually intensified public relations throughout the 1920's through the establishment of numerous societies and associations of both commercial and non-commercial kinds with movie showings, lectures and debate arrangements, the world fair in Brussels in 1924, the consuls of each country promoting their national goods and public discourse on the need for improved trade relations.⁹³ Through these warming relations Belgian Congo was becoming interesting again. Numerous lectures by the Danes with colonial experience from Congo had taken place according to Peter Tygesen⁹⁴, but the mid 1920's seems to have marked the beginning of a renewed interest. It had come up in the Foreign Ministry earlier, but in 1926 Martin Julius Clan, the state secretary of the Foreign Ministry, found it necessary to speak to the interest organisation for the industries of the opportunities for Danes in Belgian Congo.⁹⁵ This growing interest was mirrored in the popular literature on Congo. Over the second half of the 1920's books were published by the former Danish colonials and in the 1930's a flood of Belgian, British and American

91 **Strang, Herbert** (1920) pp. 62-142

92 **Floridan, Anna Augusta, Jørgensen, Grethe Anker and Lohse, Rasmus** (2000) pp. 7-29

93 Aarhus Amtstidende, 8/3/1924, 115.R.8 Belgiens billedpropaganda i Danmark, Avisårbogen 1924, pp. 50 and 96, Avisårbogen 1925, pp. 11, 20, 22, 31 and 77, 12/3/1925: Fyns venstreblad 115.R.8 Belgiens billedpropaganda i Danmark and Avisårbogen 1927, p. 24

94 **Tygesen, Peter** (2004)

95 Avisårbogen 1926, p. 9

literature swept Denmark. Through stories of Belgian Congo, the grand Congo river, the mysterious leopard men and Tarzan the same overall discourses as earlier, despite certain noticeable nuances, were everywhere in the popular journals, novels and cartoons.⁹⁶ On that backdrop, some of the points made by Frits Andersen on Knud Jespersen's book on his own experiences as an officer in the *Force Publique* from 1930, are worth mentioning. He found no sentimental criticism or constructed admiration in Jespersen's writing, but rather an explicit loyalty towards the colonial project yet also a scathing criticism of brutality and abuse of power giving one of the more prominent examples of the contradictions readers of Congo literature could face.⁹⁷ These contradictions were also present in several short stories in *Illustreret familiejournal* in 1934 by Jürgen Jürgensen and Fred Denivere.⁹⁸

Despite the turn towards an all European war over the 1930's and the occupation of Denmark from 1940 onwards, Congo still appeared in the Danish popular cultural sphere. In 1940 a character in a movie met a captain that had sailed on the Congo river and in 1943, 1944 and 1946 Viggo Jungsboell, Viktor Freiesleben and Fritz Schmidt, all former officers in the Belgian colonial army, published new books.⁹⁹ The books of Jungsboell and Freiesleben were part travel accounts of their own, part novels of formation and part fiction, but promoted Belgian colonialism through the typical fascination of the strange, distant, promiscuous as well as savage yet strongly condemnatory of both Congolese and European use of brutal violence.¹⁰⁰ Schmidt's book from 1946, recounting his own experiences that began in 1920, promoted the idea of a special Nordic character and certain images of the various people from Belgian Congo along the typical paternalist lines. Most Congolese appeared nameless in his writing, unless the relation was personal or the person deemed sympathetic by Schmidt once again pointing towards the 'before and after' discourse encounter with reality. Although he acknowledged the existence and horror of the slavery and violence that took place in the Leopoldian era, he found that it was seen outside its context and not proven in excess of what had taken place in the colonies of the other colonial powers. These were no better, just bigger and therefore not as easy targets as Belgium as a small state had been. And Belgian Congo, he argued, had since seen much progress, both in spiritual as well as material terms.¹⁰¹ This small state sympathy of Schmidt's was to become common as Danish journalists began to cover Belgian Congo in the daily press and shape the everyday discursive space on Belgian Congo more than the popular novels from the Congo veterans. This trend was probably related to the new and dramatic developments in the cold war where Denmark increasingly realised its status as a small state in the new world order in the making. The Danes were also affected by another foreign publication of enormous impact, even at the global level when the Belgian comic of Tintin in Belgian Congo was brought in Danish for the first time in 1946 and in colour in 1948 to 1949 in a weekly comic strip. Although it had

96 *Illustreret Familiejournal* no. 15, 1930 p.15-16, **Collodon, Augustus C.** (1934), **Courtney, Roger** (1935), **Jürgensen, Jürgen** (1927), **Jürgensen, Jürgen** (1929), **Lindegaard, A. E. A** (1928) and **Lütken, Otto** (1928)

97 **Andersen, Frits** (2010) pp. 523-525 and 574-594

98 *Illustreret Familiejournal* no. 12 and 13 1934

99 **Freiesleben, Viktor** (1944), **Jungsboell, Viggo** (1943), **Jungsboell, Viggo** (1944) and **Schmidt, Fritz** (1946)

100 **Andersen, Frits** (2010) pp. 472-488

101 **Schmidt, Fritz** (1946) pp. 5-103

been through somewhat of a diplomatic clean up, it repeated the clear sympathies towards Belgian colonialism of the earlier version from 1930.¹⁰²

Despite the relative openness in the Danish literature on the policies of Belgian colonialism there was little understanding of the enormous devastation the Belgians, as other colonial powers, had caused to the local social and ecological systems, their ability to sustain themselves, the scathing criticism of the Leopoldian regime and the first years of the Belgian colonial state was gradually replaced with a dawning explicit defence of the colonial project and its achievements. As indicated, this could be related to some partially implicit sympathies towards a fellow small state as well as the need for the counter images of the African other to stay intact. Not surprisingly, the personally based narratives or stories had, however, kept the overall focus less on Belgian colonial framework as such than on the fascinating cultural encounters. However, the contradictions that could be found in some of these novels and books as well as cartoons and comics, probably reflected the struggle between a complex reality and the simplistic discourses on 'Africa', 'Congo' and its peoples. Questions of local knowledge, the issue of agency and the necessity of using locals in order to live comfortable lives and run plantations, companies, mines and so on resulted in discrepancies that accordingly manifested themselves in these occasionally seemingly contradictory narratives, although these probably still provided functional counter images as the cognitive maps 'at home' were not ready to be updated and the complex reality understood in full.

Denmark and Belgium: Shifting trade balances, 1900-1932

Over the second half of the 19th century Danish farmers changed to dairy and meat production. This change in turn led to the establishment new industries, cooperative dairy companies and meat factories that mainly sold their products to Great Britain and Germany. The shipping industry also caught up with the railway as a competitive means of transportation of the industrial products, domestically as well as abroad. Shipping in turn fed trade companies, required shipping yards and technological breakthroughs onshore also established new service companies and industries making iron, metal, chemicals, vegetable oils, cement, machines and electro-technic products. A spin off of the dairy production and the machines developed specifically to increase hygiene was the establishment of a pharmaceutical industry.¹⁰³ Diversifying business empires such as the ones built by C. F. Tietgen, H. N. Andersen and his East Asian Company (EAC), the west coast empire by Ditlev Lauritzen and Arnold Peter Møller's company *A. P. Møller* (*Maersk* today) emerged and direct investments by Danish companies abroad increased from c. 1890 to 1920. These investments reflected the Danish economic basis of agriculture, trade and shipping as their origins were mostly connected to mercantile and financial circles. The few Danish direct

102 Andersen, Frits (2010) pp. 580-584 and Larsen, Rune Engelbreth (2006)

103 Boje, Per (1997) pp. 86-90, Hyldtoft, Ole and Johansen, Hans Chr. (2005) pp. 70-244, Johansen, Hans Chr. (1988) pp. 84-194, Lange, Ole (1995) pp. 23-131 and Rasmussen, Frank, Rønne, Bent Vedsted and Johansen, Hans Chr. (2000) pp. 8-82

investments in Africa were made up of coffee and sugar plantations in British East Africa by *A. P. Møller* and the Westenholz family as well as an oil refinery by *Århus Oliefabrik*. Foreign direct investments also began to decline in the 1930's¹⁰⁴ and no new ones were made.¹⁰⁵

Trade with Belgium in the period consisted of the Danish import mainly industrial products and coal and the export of mainly dairy products and meat, but in a balance favourable to Belgium as the Netherlands could also provide many of the products from Denmark. WW I though ended the trade and it appears that it was not until 1921 it began to pick back up on Belgian initiative, perhaps a consequence of the Netherlands not being able to supply enough food produce. In December 1921 the Danish envoy to Brussels home noted that the Belgian economy was run strictly as the country was still part waste lands and that Belgium was setting out to develop the colony more than hitherto.¹⁰⁶ This had the trade balance in favour of Denmark as Belgium was still not producing as much of what Denmark was importing as before the war.¹⁰⁷ As the Belgian economy picked up again, Danish imports exploded. The Dutch exports probably also regained their previous position in Belgium which kept Denmark from a balance in the trade flows. In 1928 Belgium was importing almost ten times less from Denmark than vice versa. But by 1931 the balance had changed in favour of Denmark due to the crisis and a reduced Belgian output of goods interesting to Denmark.¹⁰⁸ By 1933 the trade balance with Belgium was no longer in favour of Denmark with growing imports of Belgian industrial products. In 1934 Danish shipping companies brought back 320.000 tonnes of Belgian goods to Denmark, 3% of the total Danish import, but only 46.000 tonnes the other way.¹⁰⁹

The global crisis was felt on Danish trade in general. From 1930 onwards the Danish ministers of trade and foreign affairs were worried of the decreasing domestic consumption and the growing problems of the Danish farmers of selling their produce and products. Measures were accordingly taken in 1930 with participation in the world fair in Antwerp, a conference and a customs agreement on economic rapprochement between the Scandinavian countries, Belgium and the Netherlands that all shared an interest in keeping the trade between them as high as possible.¹¹⁰ Regardless, problems began mounting; the price on butter had fallen 38% over the last years, the unemployment rate was rising and England,

104 **Boje, Per** (2000) pp. 52-168

105 A Danish consortium had been negotiating about mining concessions in Liberia in return for constructing roads in 1932, but no agreement came through. *Avisårbogen* 1932, p. 29

106 The Danish Consular General in Antwerp to the Danish Foreign Ministry 27/1/1919, 121.D.1 Belgien - indre forhold, -1926, The Danish Consular General in Brussels to the Danish Foreign Ministry 16/11/1921, 65.J.55 Danmark-Belgien, Handelsforbindelser and the Danish Envoy in Brussels to the Danish Foreign Ministry 22/12/1921, 121.D.1 Belgien - indre forhold, -1926

107 *Le Soir* 4/4/1924, 113.Belgien.3 Udstillingen i Bryssels, Oktober 1924

108 Unspecified trade statistics, 65.J.55 Danmark-Belgien, Handelsforbindelser, The Consular General in Antwerp to the Danish Foreign Ministry 5/10/1932, 113.Belgien.14 Økonomisk udstilling i Antwerpen and undated trade statistics from the Danish envoy to Belgium in Brussels, 113.Belgien.8, La expansion Belge, 1925-1934

109 *Avisårbogen* 1932, p. 2, 32, 63-64, 75, 80 and 83, undated trade statistics from the Danish envoy to Belgium in Brussels, 113.Belgien.8, La expansion Belge, 1925-1934 and **Rasmussen, Frank, Rønne, Bent Vedsted and Johansen, Hans Chr.** (2000), p. 90

110 *Avisårbogen* 1930, p. 36, 58, 84 and 94

France as well as Belgium had repeatedly put restrictions and higher tariffs on Danish export products. The Danish government finally caved in with the broad political agreement of 1933 that also included protectionist measures in the form of strict import and export restrictions that were to define trade with Belgium and Belgian Congo among others. As an export oriented economy the total Danish import in 1934 on 10.500.000 tonnes was a major problem as the total export was only 20% thereof.¹¹¹

'Unexploited opportunities', 1900-1932

Danish trade with specific regard to Leopold's Congo Free State and later Belgian Congo reflected industrial developments, the small presence of Denmark in Africa, trade with Belgium, the troubles of Belgium of having the colony recognised formally as well as world events in the age of liberalism.

Denmark was at the beginning of the century a small colonial power¹¹² benefiting in the global trade from a position of neutrality. The focus was increasingly part European, part Baltic and part Atlantic, but following the liberal and mercantile currents the foreign ministry also paid attention to agreements between the European powers on weapon sales in Western Africa including Congo Free State, the criticism of Leopold's colonial regime and the trade volume of the new Belgian colony via the envoy in Brussels. The ministry was thus informed about both the increasing importance of Katanga as well as the fact that 26 of the 3.362 Europeans in the colony were civilian Danes.¹¹³ The envoy also notified the ministry when the post as colonial minister was re-assigned in 'normal' political crises or separate occasions.¹¹⁴

From 1900 to 1910, when Leopold's reign of terror ruled Congo assisted by an estimated 4-500 Danes, Danish products had made up on average 0,6% of all imported goods in Belgian Congo. The Danish companies were selling butter, beer and canned foods with the volume increasing.¹¹⁵ As the politics around Congo settled, the Danish trade with the Belgian colony accordingly grew. In 1911 it amounted to 0,8% of the total imports to Belgian Congo. The increasing interest was also noticed by the business newspaper, *Børsen*, as it borrowed the 1910 report from Congo from the Danish Foreign Ministry two

111 Avisårbogen 1931, pp. 35, 54-56, 61, Avisårbogen 1932, pp. 5, 8, 10, 19, 46, 51, 71, 84-85, 88 and 104 and The Consular General in Antwerp to the Danish Foreign Ministry 5/10/1932, 113.Belgien.14 Økonomisk udstilling i Antwerpen, **Just, Flemming** (2000) pp. 362- 427 and **Rasmussen, Frank, Rønne, Bent Vedsted and Johansen, Hans Chr.** (2000) p. 90

112 Greenland and The West Indies (until 1916)

113 Protocol 22/7/1908 1, 85.B.9: Våbenindførsel i Vestafrika, The English diplomatic representative to Denmark, 9/11/1908, The Danish Envoy in Brussels to the Danish Foreign Ministry 14/9/1909, Annual report from Belgian Congo via the Danish Envoy in Brussels to the Danish Foreign Ministry 18/11/1910, the Danish Envoy in Brussels to the Danish Foreign Ministry 4/8/1911, the Danish Envoy in Brussels to the Danish Foreign Ministry 25/11/1911 and the Danish Envoy in Brussels to the Danish Foreign Ministry 23/12/1911, all in 187.D Kongostatens anneksion

114 Despatch from the Danish envoy in Brussels to the Foreign Ministry from 1911 to 1934 in 121.D.1 Belgien - indre forhold, -1926 and 1926-1945

115 C. Nielsen to the Danish Foreign Ministry 18/5/1912, 65.Q.16. Kongos Handelsforhold

years after it had been brought to Denmark.¹¹⁶ The companies directly or indirectly involved were probably amongst others *Den Danske Mælke-kondenseringsfabrik* (owned by the EAC), *Beauvais*, *Esmann-Plumrose* and *Tuborg or Carlsberg*. The suggestion that these companies taking part is based on their products (conserved meat and other foods, beer and condensed milk products) and what a Danish trader located in Belgian Congo in 1912 indicated as existing Danish export goods that could be increased with some work. Agents or smaller trading companies were probably reselling their products with or without agreements.¹¹⁷ The imports were feeding stuffs, timber, ropes, oil cakes, chocolate, tea and coffee and in much higher volumes than the exports, related to the low number of Europeans in the colony at the time. The other European colonies were exporting the same goods for their industries and consumers at home: cocoa beans, palm oil, peanut oil, soy bean and other oil cakes, tobacco, cotton, coffee and from the mining regions zinc and copper too. Denmark seems to have been exporting a variety of elementary utensils like nails, gun powder, certain medical supplies, paper and flint. Danish trade with the European colonies these years favoured the French Maghreb and African colonies, then British South Africa, the other British colonies, the German colonies and finally Belgian Congo with the latter two changing place from 1912 to 1914. That said, all volumes were small, all less than 0.2% of the total Danish trade in the period.¹¹⁸

It was on this backdrop C. Nielsen, a Dane that had worked for a British trade company in both the Congo Free State and Belgian Congo, contacted the Danish Foreign Ministry in May 1912. He sent an eager report of 16 pages on trade, river logistics including the attempts of using diesel engines as well as export opportunities for Danish companies he had written himself. Firstly he wanted companies producing or selling beer, conserves, engines, machines or trading companies to get to Belgian Congo as he saw “(...) *Riches everywhere!*”¹¹⁹ Perhaps with him as the middleman. Secondly he wanted the ministry to establish a consular position in Belgian Congo as Norway and Sweden had done: “(...) *We must advance! Danish engagement is held in high esteem in the East as in the West and Denmark ought hence to be represented in Congo and Central Africa.*”¹²⁰ The reception of the report in the ministry was warm. In line with the reliance on entrepreneurial people from private businesses due to the small ministerial staff size, the Dane Colonel Jenssen-Tusch who was working for the Belgian colonial regime, and whose brother had published the monumental defence of the Congo Free State in 1905, was approached as was the relatively new Ministry of Trade and Shipping regarding the prospects of Nielsen's report and the establishment of a consulate. Six months later the Foreign Ministry published the report as their own, the Ministry of Trade and Shipping responded with a request for Nielsen's

116 The Danish Envoy in Brussels to the Danish Foreign Ministry 23/12/1911 and Børsen 7/3/1912 to the Danish Foreign Ministry, both 187.D Kongostatens annekstion

117 C. Nielsen to the Danish Foreign Ministry 18/5/1912, 65.Q.16. Kongos Handelsforhold, **Christiansen, Ingolf, Voss, Elisabeth, Hvam, Grethe and Pedersen, Jørgen E. (Eds) and Gitte Kjær** (2000) pp. 9-87, **Graae, Poul** (1963) pp. 11-141, **Hyldtoft, Ole and Johansen, Hans Chr.** (2005) pp. 70-244, **Johansen, Hans Chr.** (1988) pp. 84-194

118 Det Statistiske Departement: ”Foreign Trade of Denmark”, 1905-1914

119 C. Nielsen to the Danish Foreign Ministry 18/5/1912, 65.Q.16. Kongos Handelsforhold

120 *ibid*

second report on elephant tusks as well as rubber then in the hands of the merchants' lobby organisation and a company, Copenhagen Butter Packing Company, had also gotten interested in a contact with Nielsen which came about in March 1913.¹²¹ The Danish ship building industry with its innovative vessels and engines could have followed suit, but the conditions on the shallow Congo river called for steam driven tugboats and barges, the need for skilled labour, parts for maintenance and fuel supply and did not match the Danish types of vessels and diesel engines. The infrastructure to support the growing diesel ships only came into place some decades later.¹²²

The beginning of the war in 1914 ended any further advances in the trade with the Belgian colony with the exception of a rather significant arms deal. There is no mention of any arms going to Belgium or Belgian Congo in the official trade statistics for 1914 to 1918, nor is much material accessible in the company archives to shed more light on it. During the war that also arrived on the eastern borders of Belgian Congo with German East Africa, the Dane in charge of the Belgian colonial army, General Frederik Olsen, however was to have equipped his forces with the Danish Madsen heavy machine guns from the Copenhagen based arms manufacturer *Dansk Riffel Syndikat*¹²³. Olsen probably had them shipped via *DFDS*, the Danish shipping company sailing to Antwerp under Danish neutral flag, and then with a Belgian company to Congo.¹²⁴ During the war general trade with German Africa ceased and the French colonies were replaced as the main trading partners by South Africa and the other British colonies. Although trade with the Belgian colony stopped in periods of the war, Danish exports to Belgian Congo were slightly higher at the end of the war than before.¹²⁵

At the end of the war there was a surge from the Belgian colony as it probably used in case of supply problems from the French colonies. *Århus Oliemølle* accordingly established an office in Leopoldville.¹²⁶ Danish imports of palm seeds alone from Belgian Congo went to a level almost 70 times higher than the total Danish exports to the colony in 1919. The list of imported items was also before the war: palm oil, copper, tin, rice, ivory, rubber, cotton and coffee.¹²⁷ Judging by the type of products and their volume the oil mill and rubber factory of the EAC were - if not direct importers - at least amongst the largest recipients. However, already by 1920 relations were cooling off again. Even

121 The Danish Foreign Ministry to C. Nielsen 4/9/1912, The Danish Foreign Ministry to Jenssen-Tusch 24/10/1912, The Danish Foreign Ministry to C. Nielsen 4/9/1912, Copenhagen Butter Packing Company to the Danish Foreign Ministry 6/11/1912, The Ministry of Trade and Shipping to the Danish Foreign Ministry 12/12/1912, and C. Nielsen to the Danish Foreign Ministry 21/3/1913, all in 65.Q.16. Kongos Handelsforhold

122 Belgian Congo Today, October 1955, pp. 145- 147, **Lange, Ole** (1995) pp. 23-131 and **Rasmussen, Frank, Rønne, Bent Vedsted and Johansen, Hans Chr.** (2000) pp. 8-82

123 The company also sold arms to Imperial Russia, Germany, China and Japan as well as Portugal that used the weapons in the colonial armies against colonial uprisings.

124 **Andersen, Edvard** (1957) p. 152

125 Det Statistiske Departement: "Foreign Trade of Denmark", 1914-1918

126 **Kragelund, Poul** (1996) p. 41

127 Det Statistiske Departement: "Foreign Trade of Denmark", 1918-1919 and internal foreign ministerial note 9/8/1924, 64 Dan-Zaire (Kongo exchanged with Zaire) Handelstraktater og forhold, 1924-1962

though some imports like palm oil still came via Belgium, Belgian Congo seemed only to have filled the void of the French colonies briefly. Danish exports to the Belgian colony remained low, and Valdemar L. Sølvér, a Dane residing in Elisabethville, was probably therefore appointed Danish consul in Katanga somewhere between 1921 and 1924 in order to increase trade prospects with Belgian Congo. He was a bankrupt entrepreneur suggested to go to Congo by the officer's network previously promoting the *Force Publique* path to Danish officers. He designed the layout of Elisabethville and ended as the largest entrepreneur there in until he returned to Denmark in 1946.¹²⁸ The Danish exports to Belgium Congo never took off, maybe because of the once again intensifying Danish relations with the French colonies. The indirect imports via Belgium would easily have cancelled any increase out in any case. In 1924 almost 10% of the goods worth 28.2 million DKR Denmark imported from Belgium were ropes, chocolate, zinc and sugar, most likely from Belgian Congo.¹²⁹ The Belgians wanted to increase exports, however. The Danish delegation that went to Belgium in spring 1924 to talk about butter was therefore also shown the colonial exhibition in Brussels to warm up to the idea of increasing Danish trade with Belgian Congo further. It worked like a charm as an internal note from the Foreign Ministry in August 1924 shows with the 'enormous' opportunities in Belgian Congo once again on the agenda. Denmark ranked as number 14 in terms of volume on the list of countries exporting to the colony, something noted with some disappointment. It was also noted that there seemed only to be an interest in butter in the other direction. Several Danish products that were seen as fit to compete in terms of quality and price were listed and a process of clarifying treaty conditions was also initiated leaving a trail of almost 20 reports, briefs and legal interpretations of the various treaties the Danish relations with Belgian Congo were defined by.¹³⁰ The interest within the ministry was clearly a lasting one. As mentioned previously, Martin Julius Clan, the state secretary of the Foreign Ministry, found it necessary to speak to the interest organisation for the industries of the opportunities in Belgian Congo in 1926. However, his message led nowhere as the imports from Belgian Congo again in 1927 far outweighed the exports. And just as prior to the war, the trade with Belgian Congo never exceeded the trade with the British and French colonies.¹³¹

From 1929 onwards Danish trade with Belgian Congo began to drop in the context of the crisis of global capitalism and in its wake liberalism as an economic paradigm. Imports had decreased to only 300 tonnes of goods, mainly wood and cotton altogether worth 1.4 million Francs indirectly from Hamburg.¹³² Denmark imported large amounts of copper and tin, probably from the 'copperbelt' in the

128 **Andersen, Edvard** (1957) p. 236 og **Thygesen, Peter** (2001) p. 154

129 Unspecified trade statistics, 65.J.55 Danmark-Belgien, Handelsforbindelser and Det Statistiske Departement: "Foreign Trade of Denmark", 1918-1924

130 La Maetel Anvers 3/4/1924, 113.Belgien.3 Udstillingen i Bryssels, Oktober 1924 and Internal notice 9/8/1924, 64 Dan-Zaire (Kongo exchanged with Zaire) Handelstraktater og forhold, 1924-1962 and the folder 64 Dan-Zaire (Kongo exchanged with Zaire) Handelstraktater og forhold, 1924-1962

131 Det Statistiske Departement: "Foreign Trade of Denmark", 1924-1927 and **Olesen, Thorsten Borring and Villaume, Poul** (2006) pp. 382-384

132 La Expansion Belge January 1930, p. 9

British southern African colonies. This seems likely as the Belgians were so eager to have Danish imports rise again that the January edition of the journal promoting Belgian business, *La Expansion Belge*, was dedicated to Denmark with a large part published in Danish. Expectedly one could read of the Danish 'pioneers', their great achievements and importance for the colony.¹³³ A 1931 summary on the Treaty Commission of 1925 reveals the interest:

*“Even though Danish economic interests in the Congo Basin are insignificant, the survey of the Treaty Commission nonetheless revealed that the interest regarding the sale of Danish products in Belgian Congo was higher than expected. The question of revision of the specific treaties should therefore not be regarded without an interest from Denmark.”*¹³⁴

However, little came of it. Direct investments by Danish companies never materialised either. *Århus Oliemølle*, the vegetable oil factory in Århus, had as mentioned established an office in Leopoldville in 1919, but the project never went further. The company established itself in French colonial Morocco in the 1920's instead. Hans Christensen, the man in charge of the project in Congo and son of the mayor of Århus, ended up staying in Congo establishing a plantation with a 1000 workers on his own instead.¹³⁵

One can sense how the big picture was changing from the age of liberalism to the age of troubled horizons in the Danish trade with Belgian Congo. The report from C. Nielsen that was passed around by the Foreign Ministry - then not wrongly described as an office of the East Asian Company¹³⁶ - along with the setting up of communications between the butter company from Copenhagen and C. Nielsen - illustrates this well, as do all the Belgian manoeuvres to increase exports from both Belgian companies and their colonial corporations and plantations. Moreover, the delicacies of the institutional framework of the ministries in Denmark also stood out. The trade and shipping ministry had only been established in 1908 after several years of merchant lobbying by the liberal government seeking to profit from urban merchant support. The foreign ministry, however, had succeeded in keeping both foreign trade as well as the consular apparatus. As the merchant lobby organisation moreover kept a close watch over the trade and shipping ministry by supplying ministers directly, it remained weak. That the merchant lobby organisation passed on the Nielsen report to the ministry and not vice versa is quite indicative. The merchant lobby organisation also wanted to keep the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from setting up a business council as this would play too much into the hands of the EAC. In 1921 the ministry was to grow significantly, but due to overall budget cuts this never materialised and numerous trade delegations were used to compensate for the lack of the governmental assistance. By 1929 the trade

133 Op cit., pp. 4-9 and Statistisk Årbog, 1930, p. 75, Table 77

134 Internal summary from 1931 located in the file 002 Udenrigsministeriet, 1945-1972, Gruppeordnede Sager 64 Dan-Zaire (previously titled Dan-Kongo) Trade Agreements and relations, 1924-1962, box 8510 (My translation)

135 Andersen, Edvard (1957) pp. 91-101

136 Lidegaard, Bo (2003) pp. 208-216

ministry also still only had a staff of only 11 employees due to the ministerial infighting. However, the Social Democratic government turned this liberal minded ministry into one of the strongest regulatory institutions with the import and export regulations in 1932. As Denmark went from one of the most liberal oriented economies to a regulated economy, the corporatist element became even stronger than hitherto. The lobby organisations from both agriculture, trade and the industries were integrated through councils and committees on trade, production and raw materials.¹³⁷

Adjusting to 'the global', 1933-1956

Denmark was hit hard as the crisis deepened and protectionist regimes were established to avoid its impact. Exports were only 20% of the imports in 1934. The Belgian share of the Danish trade was only 3% of the imports and even smaller in relation to exports. This was a reflection of the overall trend from 1933 to 1939 with Danish trade being increasingly concentrated on Great Britain and Germany with their 95% of the total Danish exports. The focus turned to Germany from 1939 onwards with its share of Danish exports rising from 23% to 71% in 1941, a trend that continued throughout the war.¹³⁸ At the end of the war a bilateral trade agreement between Denmark and Belgium was signed and trade increased again over the late 1940's albeit with continued constraints related to the establishment of the Benelux customs union, general currency problems as well as the post-war liberalisation regime.¹³⁹ At this point there was also growing Danish irritation with Great Britain as a trading partner on and off from 1948 to 1956 due to the disregard for the liberalisation regime when it came to agricultural produce as well as insistence on favouring the British Commonwealth and colonies. To some extent Belgium was probably, along with other countries, used to attempt to challenge the dependency of the British market although trade flows still went mainly to Great Britain and Germany that in 1950 still claimed 75% of all Danish agricultural exports.¹⁴⁰ Belgium was not a perfect trading partner though, as it was too small and too attached to the Netherlands. As late as the mid 1950's, when the market bloc talks were beginning, the Danish minister for foreign trade, Jens Otto Krag, therefore felt compelled to repeat his earlier plea from the OEEC conference in Paris in 1956 on the Danish liberalisation interests to his Belgian colleague, Victor Larock, in an insisting letter.¹⁴¹ On this backdrop the Eastern European countries, the newly independent countries in Africa and the increasingly accessible colonial markets as Belgian Congo became interesting for both export and import. As Denmark was gradually removed from the 'trading with the enemy' lists¹⁴² that had been imposed during the war, the British colonies and the

137 Eriksen, August Wiemann (1987) pp. 104-118 and 142, Kjølens, K. (2000) pp. 746-769, Thomsen, Birgit Nüchel (1987) pp. 22-31 and Svenningsen, Niels and Fischer, Paul (1970) pp. 7-10 and 110-130

138 Lund, Joachim (2005) pp. 283-208, Olesen, Thorsten Borring and Villaume, Poul (2006) pp. 68-69 and Rasmussen, Frank, Rønne, Bent Vedsted and Johansen, Hans Chr. (2000) p. 90

139 The Belgian ambassador to the Belgian Minister of Commerce 31/8/1945, 20/8/1947, 12/7/1948 and Direction B: "Danmark – Discrimination à l'égard des produits de l'U.E.B.L 6/3/1950 BFM/DA: Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark

140 Olesen, Thorsten Borring and Villaume, Poul (2006) pp. 68-69, 137 and 382-384

141 Jens Otto Krag to Victor Larock, 19/7/1956, BFM/DA: Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark

142 Australia, New Zealand and the South African Union cleared Denmark for trade 16/5/1945. Internal foreign

commonwealth also became interesting once again. In a period also marked by the spread and depth of Western capitalism from 1940's onwards¹⁴³, the Danish economy was experiencing global re-integration at a hitherto unseen level. This integration into 'the global' came in many ways. Trade was one, another was how the Danish economy along with the rest of Western economies had become dependant on Middle Eastern oil with the consumption of this energy source and new industrial foundation doubling over the 1950's. The shipping companies therefore became larger and more politically influential because they brought home foreign currency and the new lifeblood of the economy, oil. Not only had this given A.P. Møller, owner of one of the largest shipping companies, personal access to the first two post-war Social Democratic prime ministers in their government offices at his discretion, but one of these governments, otherwise in full applause of the right to strike, had even intervened in a strike by law as it began to affect the national distribution of the oil. During the Suez canal crisis a few months later the prime minister also ignored the given legal advice in order to safeguard Danish shipping interests and accordingly national interests and persuaded the Danish parliament to cast an unanimous vote. A. P. Møller was also given special privileges in matters of oil exploration and higher customs on imported plastic to protect a new plastic factory and the East Asian Company were given exemptions to laws otherwise specifically directed at the shipping business in the late 1950's.¹⁴⁴

The EAC had been a prime mover in Africa after the war with its years of experience of getting access to countries where others would face problems due to language issues, matters of size, logistical means etc. In 1945 most other export oriented companies focused on the South African Union as had the foreign ministry in terms of representation. By 1947 French West Africa, Nigeria and probably also other parts of British West Africa became interesting as trade agreements were signed. Shipping routes like *Dafra's* followed this pattern. When the EAC established itself in British East Africa in 1949 others followed, the foreign ministry too although the official presence was kept at the commercial rather than the diplomatic level. Until 1952 emphasis remained here with the highest Danish exports.¹⁴⁵

Little Danish efforts were put into increasing trade with Belgian Congo from 1928 and almost two decades onwards. The import and export restrictions were probably the main reason over the 1930's and then came the war that sealed Congo off from Europe. There appears to have been only one occasion between 1928 and 1948 that called for the attention of the Danish foreign ministry. With the crisis still felt the Danish ambassador to Belgium was in 1935 asked to look into the specifics of imported butter,

ministerial note, 29/11/1945, Landbrugsrådet 1.A.49

143 **Dowd, Douglas** (2004) pp. 141-151

144 Political Depeche from the Danish ambassador at the UN, New York, no. XVI, 17th of September, 1956 and Danmarks Rederiforening: Det Østasiatiske Kompagni, 1956-1957, Indgået Korrespondance vedr. Suez Kanalen, pk. 60, **Social Demokraten**, 11/1/1959, **Information** 30/12/1959, **Politiken**, 22/1/1960, **Flindt Stephensen, J.E.** (1980) pp. 21-26, **Hjortdal, Helge** (1999) pp. 160, **Nissen, Henrik S.** (2002) pp. 150-154, **Rüdiger, Mogens** (2010) p. 222 and **Villaume, Poul** (1995) pp. 710-726

145 Nigerian official to Danish consul in Nigeria, 18/11/1947, Landbrugsrådet, Nord-Mellem-Vest Afrika 1.A.49, Undated note on opportunities for Danish goods in French West Africa, 1949, Landbrugsrådet, Nord-Mellem-Vest Afrika 1.A.49 and Agricultural lobby organisation to the foreign ministry, 28/2/1952, Landbrugsrådet, 2.B.1952

milk, cheese and meat to Belgian Congo. As Belgium was within the ten largest buyers of Danish agricultural output there was perhaps a hope that an effort could lead to an increase. Little came of the ambassador's follow-up though.¹⁴⁶ And then interests faded for a decade.

In 1945 the Belgian ambassador to Denmark pointed out to the Belgian Foreign Minister that the lack of coffee in Denmark could provide a setting for a psychological effect from a large shipment coffee arriving from Congo with regard to increasing colonial trade again. Denmark, he wrote, was once again interested in copper, tin, cotton, oil and coffee. The goodwill would moreover be of significant advantage with regard to the Danish merchant fleet that was widely used by both the Benelux countries and Belgian Congo. The Belgian coffee plot amounted to nothing though. At least, the Danish statistical department never reported anything on Belgian or Congolese coffee or on other Congolese goods. In fact, only 3 ships came from sub-Saharan Africa to Denmark in 1945.¹⁴⁷ However, the ambassador was not wrong with regard to the importance of the Danish merchant fleet. From 1946 onwards the Danish shipping company *Dafra* began connecting Hamburg, Bremen, Rotterdam and Antwerp to Boma and Matadi on the Congolese coast as well as sail on the Congo river from 1951. The following year a regular line was established and more ships each larger than the previous and with enlarged refrigerated compartments were needed. Several of these ships were built near Copenhagen.¹⁴⁸

The East Asian Company, previously established in South Africa, had gotten into business in Ruanda-Urundi as well as in Katanga, Bukavu and Bunia in Belgian Congo with hides, coffee, oil, imports of auto-parts, insurance work and distribution of both Studebakers and Volkswagens from 1949 with the purchase of 80% of the stocks in the originally British East Africa based trading company 'Old East'.¹⁴⁹ The stocks of the company had been bought at a beneficial price when things were at a low following the war, but within a few years that included funding from the large corporate banks of Belgian Congo to avoid the risks of under-capitalisation, the results were deemed satisfying. Plans for a plantation in Congo were also to be drawn up. The overall orientation of the EAC was both clear and unsurprising; international business with the highest possible profits was at the centre, political awareness and strategic understanding of both politics and resources were crisp, the view of the company was aligned with the West, Africans were seen as 'under-developed' with primitive agricultural practices rather than a different notion of property and land ownership and the *Mau Mau* movement in Kenya was therefore seen as terrorists.¹⁵⁰ Despite of its growing presence, pro-colonial attitudes and that it had probably been

146 Statistisk Årbog 1928-1954, the Danish envoy to Belgium, 14/7/1935, 66.C.Belgien Kolonier.10 Mælk og fløde, and Statistisk Årbog, 1930, p. 80, tables 79 and 80

147 Belgian Ambassador to Denmark to Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Paul Henry Spaak, 31/8/1945, BFM/DA: Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark and Statistisk Årbog, 1945, table 112

148 **Johansen, Ole Stig** (2005) pp. 12-14

149 A presence was soon established in both Rhodesias, Nyasaland and the Gold Coast

150 Unspecified internal EAC note, 1950 Sydøstasiens råstoffer, notes to CEO Haakon Christensen 23/10/1950 and 1952 + annex, Vestafrika, 1944-1952 (R.T. Briscoe), Østasiatisk Kompagnis Årsregnskab 1951, General Manager Bjørling to EAC 28/10/1952, Old East to EAC 13/11/1953, 26/11/1953 and september 1953 report, Østafrika 1949-1953, Nationaltidende, 31/10/1954 and an un-dated fax from T. Soderberg to C. L. Larsen, East African Trading

at the edge of the Danish trade with the Belgian colony since its establishment through its diversified empire, several visits by top people from 1952 to 1954 to inspect company assets appears to have been paid little attention by the Belgians. This was probably due to both the size of the Belgian corporations in the colony as well as EAC appears to have been shipping its goods out through Mombasa in Kenya rather than down the Congo river. The 1953 delegation coming to inspect the company's various assets, however, was different as it consisted of the chairman of the EAC, Prince Axel who was also the cousin of the recently deceased Belgian Queen Astrid, and the two other top people in the EAC, Haakon Christensen and Mogens Pagh. The interest of the Belgians began already at the arrival of the visa applications and all courtesy was to be extended to the delegation. The delegation was business as usual though and little more came of it.¹⁵¹

A comparatively low number of Europeans and lower trade volumes than with British East Africa in 1953 and 1954 probably kept official interest away from Belgian Congo until 1955. Due to the Mau Mau rebellion the focus had shifted from British East Africa to the new Federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland rather than Belgian Congo despite the fact that both Sweden and Norway had already sent delegations to the Belgian colony. Two foreign ministerial officials visited British East Africa as well as the Central African Federation in 1954 and wrote two reports on the prospects of increasing Danish trade. Little attention was paid to the harsh colonial efforts that included concentration camps to shut down the rebellion. The Mau Mau rebellion itself rather than the problems behind it, the high number of Europeans in the federation and the high wages of the African mining workers were all arguments to focus on the federation rather than British East Africa. The commercial attaché accordingly left Nairobi to go to Salisbury with the full endorsement of the industrial lobby organisation. The agricultural lobby organisation, however, seems to have begun to develop an interest in Belgian Congo as exports were growing and agricultural products, it was realised, made up 75%. In the larger picture Danish exports to French West Africa, British West Africa, British East Africa and Rhodesia exceeded those to Belgian Congo. Importwise it also ranked below the aforementioned colonies. In comparison, however, trade was stronger both ways with Belgian Congo than the two East Bloc countries Romania and Bulgaria. In the summer of 1955 a proposal of a four week delegation to Belgian Congo as well as Mozambique, Angola and French Equatorial Africa was launched from the energetic new ambassador to Belgium Lars Tillitse. At this point the industrial lobby organisation was happy to send only one official and for less than the four weeks proposed by the foreign ministry. In September, a few meetings later, the idea had taken hold, however, and nobody accordingly wanted to wait until the spring 1956 to go.¹⁵²

Company 1970-1990

151 General Directorate in Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to the Minister of the Colonies, 2/10/1953, BFM/DA: Affairs Etrangères, Con. Bel. Rel. Danemark

152 The Danish envoy to Belgium, 28/10/1953, 1.A.49 1953, Minutes of the Commerical Attachés' Committee's meeting, 26/3/1954 and 19/10/1954, Landbrugsrådet, 2.B.1954, Foreign Ministry to the Commerical Attachés' Committee, 5/3/1955, Landbrugsrådet, 2.B.1955, Minutes of the Commerical Attachés' Committee's meeting 10/3/1955, 27/6/1955 and 1/9/1955, Landbrugsrådet, 2.B.1955 and the Statistical department, Foreign trade of Denmark, 1953-1955

The Danish trade with the Belgian colony increased over the early 1950's without the involvement of the foreign ministry. The growth was most likely due to increased access via *Dafra* and its refrigerated ships. In 1950 the balance had even been in Danish favour, but from 1951 the balance changed. The total amounts were as such not significant as Denmark for instance only had 0,2% of the market of import to the colony and 0,4% of its exports in 1954. In certain categories Denmark was well represented however. Danish butter for instance made up 30% of the total. Other products were milk, eggs, honey, chickens, fish, paper, machines and electric machinery (mainly refrigerators of various sorts) but in less significant quantities falling behind the Netherlands and New Zealand. Imports were palm oil, palm nuts, tobacco, ivory, feedingstuffs for animals, wood, wheat and rubber. Denmark was the third largest trading partner after Belgium and Germany with regard to palm oil and the fifth largest buyer of palm oil cakes. Danish companies were small but not unimportant players. The milk and cream exports to the federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland in 'the copperbelt' were for instance also far beyond those to Belgian Congo while remaining minimal in these places compared to the Commonwealth competition. The Danish envoy in Belgium began paying attention to the increasing trade and accordingly began forwarding materials on the Belgian colony. The envoy's reporting was close to the type of articles one could find in the popular journals with news on royalty, the 'under-developed' Africans and the Belgian civilisation mission. With pride it was for instance mentioned that the Danish born General Olsen, commander of the *Force Publique* had been present during King Baudouin's speech at his return from Congo.¹⁵³

The Danish food industry was part of the aforementioned shift in global food systems that was taking place pushing both Western and 'third world' cash crop farmers, urban as well as rural workers to gradually become partially if not completely dependent on either cash crops from their own area or foods from the imperial centres and western economies.¹⁵⁴ This removal of local food sovereignty was also present in Belgian Congo and even before 1945. A famine ravaged the colony in 1936 as the cotton industry had reduced not only the food supply drastically by increasing its lands producing cotton, but also ensured that the peasants were short of time to hunt for the needed protein through its labour schemes. This combination turned malnutrition into widespread famine.¹⁵⁵ The Danish food industry was both part of and able to keep its influence along with the shipping, machinery and cement industries at the top of the otherwise increasingly industrial Danish export economy due to this change. Small companies like *Nyborg Mælkecentral*, *Esbjerg Mælkeindustri* and *Vejle Tørmælksfabrik* wanted to go in but needed agents and transport. The various sectors were hence feeding on each other; one providing

153 The Statistical Department to the Foreign ministry, 22/12/1951, 66.C.10 Danmark Mælk og fløde, Governor General E. Jungers to the Belgian Government from 1950, 121.K.1/Bilag, the Danish envoy to Belgium, 8/8/1952, 121.K.1 Belgisk Kongo, internal foreign ministerial note, 13/6/1955, 64 Dan-Zaire (previously titled Dan-Kongo) Trade Agreements and relations, 1924-1962 and the Office of the Royal Colonial Inspector to the Governor General in Leopoldville, 19/11/1955, Archives Africaines, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AE/II 1178. Demandes d'autorisation et de facilités pour voyages de particuliers. 629) Mission commerciale danoise 1956 (3201) and appendices

154 Davis, Mike (2001) pp. 1-190 and Stearns, Peter (2006) 1-142

155 Likaka, Osumaka (1997) p. 38-39

logistics through shipping and the other outgoing products. The overall problem was partly acknowledged by one of the leading agricultural experts in Denmark, member of the OEEC agricultural committee and professor at the Royal Danish Agricultural Academy Aksel Milthers. In 1952 he pointed out that it was not rare that Africans were malnourished despite their countries exporting of agricultural products. His article was tellingly focused on how price policies within Great Britain and the Commonwealth along with custom arrangements like the Benelux union were hurting Danish exports.¹⁵⁶

Parallel with the colonial trade evolving, the Benelux customs union signalled its interest in a general trade agreement with Denmark. The dynamics of the union favoured external markets, especially the large Belgian industrial production needed to find such. Negotiations were concluded in late 1956.¹⁵⁷

The horizon of expectations, 1956-1959

On the backdrop of the growing interests, the trade agreement and the aforementioned Belgian campaign in the Danish popular journal *Se & Hør* over the early months of 1956 a promotion campaign was launched by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was specifically aimed at increasing relations with the Belgian colony and was followed up with a visit of a delegation to Belgian Congo amongst other African destinations. The EAC was not running the foreign ministry like a few decades earlier nor was the advertising campaign run by the foreign ministry with an introduction by the Danish Social Democratic Prime Minister H. C. Hansen catering especially for the interests of the EAC. Rather, the diversified empire of the EAC gave it an omnipresence in Danish foreign trade. A noticeable part of the companies advertising in the promotion such as 'Old East', *Sabroe* and *Plumrose* were therefore connected to the EAC either working with or for the company, owned by it, soon bought by it or sharing board members. Other companies in the promotion were the breweries *Tuborg* and *Carlsberg* that both had seen sales abroad rise in the 1950s, the shipyard *B & W* that from 1933 to 1958 was responsible for 10% of the total Danish industrial exports, the alcohol producer *Danisco* and *Fisker & Nielsen* involved in the machinery industry.¹⁵⁸ Canned food and dairy product companies such as the already present *Plumrose* and *Århus Oliefabrik* and those wanting in were also advertising.¹⁵⁹

156 The Danish ambassador to Belgium to the Foreign Ministry, 20/6/1953, 66.C.Belgien Kolonier.10 Mælk og fløde, Esbjerg Mælkeindustri to the Foreign Ministry, 12/8/1953, 66.C.Belgien Kolonier.10 Mælk og fløde and internal foreign ministerial note, 15/10/1956 and another un-dated note, both 66.C.10 Danmark mælk og fløde and **Christensen, Jens** (2009) pp. 26-47, **Milthers, Aksel** (1952) pp. 130-137 and **Olesen, Thorsten Borring and Villaume, Poul** (2006) pp. 379-384

157 Political Depeche from the Danish envoy to Belgium, 14/6/1955, Political Depeche from the Danish envoy to Belgium, 2/7/1955, 121.K.1 Belgisk Kongo, internal notice 27/6/1956 from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 121.K.1 Belgisk Kongo, Trade Agreement between Denmark and Benelux 1956 and internal foreign ministerial note, 21/1/1957, both in 73.D.156.A Danmark – Benelux handelsaftale

158 "Le Danmark salute le Congo Belge, the Danish Foreign Ministry, 1956, the Office of the Royal Colonial Inspector to the Governor General in Leopoldville, 19/11/1955, Archives Africaines, S.P.F. AE/II 1178. Demandes d'autorisation et de facilités pour voyages de particuliers. 629) Mission commerciale danoise 1956 (3201), **Christensen, Jens** (2009) pp. 26-47, **Christiansen, Ingolf, Voss, Elisabeth, Hvam, Grethe and Pedersen, Jørgen E. (Eds) and Gitte Kjær** (2000) p. 149, **Hjejle, Bernt** (1982), p. 87 and **Johansen, Hans Chr.** (1988) p. 258

159 "Le Danmark salute le Congo Belge, the Danish Foreign Ministry, 1956 and **Graae, Poul** (1963) p. 298

The delegation was made up of Tillitse, representatives from several companies: the shipping company *A.P. Møller*, the Aalborg based global trading company *Erik Emborg*, the company probably behind the growing export of pharmaceuticals to Belgian Congo from early 1956 *Scanfarma*, *Dafra*, *B & W*, the EAC's condensed milk factory *Den Danske Mælkekondenseringsfabrik*, the refrigeration specialist *Sabroe*, the company behind paper exports to Belgian Congo *Møller & Landschultz* and finally *Fisker & Nielsen* and *Vesta* that shared a representative and representatives from the lobby organisations for the industries, agriculture, trade and the engineers.¹⁶⁰ The presence of the latter on trade delegations was a decade old tradition as was their institutionalised influence in governmental committees, councils and boards: the chief of the ECA mission in Denmark, C. Marshall, had aimed at reconfiguring the lobby setup, but had been corrected by an aggressive and confrontational P. Wonsild, the chairman of the industrial lobby organisation. A representative of the coop in Aarhus producing condensed milk, Schou, had also been invited to join the delegation to Belgian Congo, but had refused to go since Dutch subsidies made competition impossible. An irritation towards the Benelux union also came out in a journal by the Danish trade minister, the economist Kjeld Phillip, in 1957.¹⁶¹ The bitterness of Schou towards the Dutch agricultural subsidies is noteworthy also.

The delegation visited all provinces, their management and trade associations. The facilities of both the corporate mining giant *Union Minière* and the railway of Katanga, the *BCK*, and their leaderships were visited. Interestingly the cemetery holding the 'pioneers' was also visited, presumably to have the delegation connecting to the Danish 'pioneer' narrative.¹⁶² The Danish ambassador to Belgium, Tillitse, wrote in his report that he was impressed with the Belgian modernisation efforts despite: “*the evolution of the black race is proceeding slowly due to the primitive level it still finds itself at.*”¹⁶³ The conclusion of the report co-written by Tillitse and Frederick de Jonquières, a higher ranking employee of the business office of the Danish foreign ministry, were full of admiration for the rational modernisation efforts, the administration of both this process, the peoples and territories and therefore concluded that an attempt to improve Danish trade would be worth the efforts. The chairman of the lobby organisation for the engineers, Ove Guldberg, who had also taken part in the trip was equally impressed with the modernisation work done by the Belgians in all aspects, but he was, despite the enormous works undertaken in railway and harbour logistics, road networks, telecommunications, workers' housing projects within the 10-year plan for the Belgian colony, much less optimistic with regard to possibilities for Danish entrepreneurs or individual Danish engineers to take part in these projects due to the dominance of the giant Belgian corporations and their reliance on their own entrepreneurial companies. Guldberg networked to all of his abilities, but little response came from the Danish entrepreneurial

160 The ambassador to Belgium to Auguste Buisseret, Minister of the Colonies, 31/1/1956, Archives Africaines, S.P.F. AE/II 1178. Demandes d'autorisation et de facilités pour voyages de particuliers. 629) Mission commerciale danoise 1956 (3201)

161 Internal ministerial note, 2/11/1955, 66.C.10 Danmark mælk og fløde and **Phillip, Kjeld** (1957) pp. 289-304

162 Un-dated itinerary for the Danish delegation, Archives Africaines, S.P.F. AE/II 1178. Demandes d'autorisation et de facilités pour voyages de particuliers. 629) Mission commerciale danoise 1956 (3201)

163 Report on Belgian Congo by Tillitse, Ingeniør-foreningen, v28, Belgisk Congo 1955-1957, p. 13

sector. *Kampsax* and *Christiani & Nielsen*, two Danish engineering companies involved in globalising modernity in Indonesia, Sudan and Brazil, also turned down the chance to make an offer for 2.377 workers residences to be built in Leopoldville a few months after the delegation's visit.¹⁶⁴

The Belgians considered the visit a succes and were surprised that it took a long time to decide whether or not to send a formal representative or a young trader with a scholarship and then follow up on that decision.¹⁶⁵ Danish exports were growing and at this point Denmark provided all antibiotics to the colony, 60% of all the fat milk powder, 50% of the vaccum-packaged sausages, 30% of the butter and 20% of the canned meat. But the Danish interests were not centred on Belgian Congo as much as the Belgians were perhaps hoping for as imports from 1956 to 1958 fell by 66% to a level where the South African Union and the Central African Federation were importing more than Denmark. Trade with Belgian Congo also fell behind the Danish trade with the Gold Coast with independence in 1957. The leap here was probably connected to the EAC's purchase of the timber company R.T. Briscoe in 1957. The trade with Belgian Congo still tripled between 1956 and 1959, however, and was therefore still important for Denmark as shown in appendix 2.¹⁶⁶

When the Belgian exhibition of 1957 had been accepted, the level of involvement and number of staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the planning and organisational process grew with the Director of the Ministry, the heads of the Political Legal and Economic Political Offices, the press agency and the administrative section all personally getting involved once or more often several times along with their staff. The Danish Prime and Foreign Affairs Minister and the trade minister agreed to interviews on Danish-Belgian relations with the head of the Belgian journalist delegation, a former senator. Once the participation of the Prime Minister had been secured, a Belgian invitation to a movie show of King Baudouin's trip to the colony at the embassy and a reception was extended to 150 people from the Danish political, economic and social elites. Although several ministers including the Prime Minister were finally unable to show up, it was the manifestation of taking relations to a new level when the Director of the Ministry counter proposed a formal dinner at the Danish Parliament with the Prime Minister as host, which was happily accepted. The guest list included the ministers of trade and foreign economics, Prince Axel of the EAC, Ambassador Tillitse as well as the top representatives from the lobby organisations along with some weighty representatives of the Danish press.¹⁶⁷ In relation to the

164 Report on Belgian Congo by Tillitse and F. de Jonquières, Ingeniør-foreningen, v28, Belgisk Congo 1955-1957 and report on Belgian Congo by Ove Guldberg, Ingeniør-foreningen, v28, Belgisk Congo 1955-1957, Ove Guldberg to Kampsax and Christiani & Nielsen, 5/11/1956, Ingeniør-foreningen, v28, Belgisk Congo 1955-1957

165 Belgian ambassador to Denmark to Belgian Minister of Trade Victor Larock, 7/9/1956, Archives Africaines, S.P.F. Affaires étrangères, AE/II 1178. Demandes d'autorisation et de facilités pour voyages de particuliers. 629) Mission commerciale danoise 1956 (3201)

166 Notes to EAC CEO Haakon Christensen 23/10/1950 and 1952 + annex, Vestafrika, 1944-1952 (R.T. Briscoe), Bilag til Betænkning afgivet af Kommissionen af 25. oktober 1957 om Udenrigstjenesten, nr. 270, 1960, pp. 44-49 and Udenrigsministeriets Tidsskrift for udenrigshandel og verdensøkonomi, no. 26, 1959, pp. 449-455, "Belgian Congo", Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi Information and Public Relations Office, 1959 and the Statistical department, Foreign trade of Denmark, 1957-1959

167 Political Depeche from the Danish ambassador to Belgium, 22/10/1957, 2) from the Head of the ministerial Press

exhibition itself, the Belgian embassy wanted to establish a committee with royal patronage. However, as the exhibition was not under the patronage of the Belgian royal family, it was not possible. The retired *Force Publique* General Olsen was to join the committee along with Jens Otto Krag, the Minister of Foreign Economics and Tillitse.¹⁶⁸

The newly appointed Danish Consular General to Belgium Congo, Svend Aage Sandager Jeppesen, arrived in Leopoldville just three weeks after the colonial exhibition in Copenhagen. Upon his arrival he took up his duties with great resolve visiting the different provinces, speaking to the chambers of commerce and local foreign trade department offices as well as governors although he just missed Pétillon, the Governor General, whom had left for Bruxelles. At these meetings he was sure not to forget to mention that both the manager and chairman of the EAC were soon again passing through the colony as well as the exhibition in Copenhagen. He also spoke with the different companies importing foodstuffs of the like produced in Denmark. He furthermore held a press conference to make his presence and capacities known to businesses there. Throughout his work on promotions and networking procedures he got around and was therefore quick to detect that the Belgians were at a critical moment. The post war boom had worn off and was by now causing some nervousness, especially in small companies which had led to a small but growing stream of capital transfers. The construction of the largest hydraulic power station in Africa was in the early steps, but appeared not entirely convincing regarding the Belgian desire and will to stay in the colony.¹⁶⁹ The ongoing attempt to include the Congolese in local administrations as mayors and officials was also seen as a showcase experiment. He began questioning the future of the Danish trade as he posed:

“the question whether it was not too optimistic to expect the markets based on the natives to be of larger relevance for Danish exports in the coming years”.¹⁷⁰

The Consular General also escorted Prince Axel to a meeting with Pétillon later. Whether kept out of the report for the sake of the company's interests or because the focus was not on these matters, he reported that the Governor General had mainly spoken of the growing political problems between the natives and the colonial administration on the one hand and Belgium and the colonial administration on the other

Agency to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 25/10/1957, 3) from the Head of the Ministerial Business Office to the Director of the Ministry, the the Heads of the Administrative section, the Political Legal Office, the Economic Political Office and the ministerial Press Agency, 30/10/1957, 4) from the Head of the ministerial Press Agency to the Head of the Economic Political Office, 31/10/1957, 5) from the Head of the ministerial Press Agency to the Director of the Ministry, 4/11/1957

168 1) The Head of the Ministerial Business Office to the Director of the Ministry, the Heads of the Administrative section, the Political Legal Office, the Economic Political Office and the ministerial Press Agency, 30/10/1957 and 2) Ambassador Tillitse to the Head of the Ministerial Business Office, 4/11/1957, both 112.U.3/Belg, Belgiske journalister besøg i København i forbindelse med belgisk koloniudstilling i KBH, oktober-november 1957

169 Although he expected the contracts to be given to Belgian companies when things moved ahead, the Danish cement giant, *F.L. Schmidt*, was urged to keep open eyes on developments.

170 Political Depeche from the Consular General to Belgian Congo, 27/11/November 1957, 121.K.1 Belgisk Kongo (my translation)

hand and even explained to him that he was worried that the pressure from Bruxelles would cause things to move even faster, implicitly thereby also in different ways than hoped for. A question mark was added in the side next to this particular sentence by whoever read the report in the ministry as a question to what the future would bring. Sandager-Jeppesen had also noted that Pétillon had openly questioned the Belgian official policy of the establishment of a Belgo-Congolese 'community' at their first meeting. The report ended with the note that the political stability could only be kept under a slow and firmly controlled development as:

*“The natives are like children in both large and small reactions, having to be guided, and to be guided by authority.”*¹⁷¹

Later he focused solely on the elections in the 8 native communes and 3 European communes within the Leopold province and elaborated on the democratic elements or lack thereof in these. No one was to be elected by direct elections as the candidates for the positions as mayors were on short lists of 'suited' people with the the provincial governor choosing the mayors among these. The most interesting aspect of the election, he reported, was how it was possible to discern voting along beginning ethnic or national lines. The majority of the votes in the province had gone to the ABAKO association with roots in both French Equatorial Africa and Angola. Perhaps for reassurance:

*“It has to be added that Belgian Congo for the moment is politically stable and that nothing is indicating that Belgian rule within a reasonably short period of time will face determining troubles.”*¹⁷²

Half a year later he wrote the report 'Congo at a crossroads' reflecting on where Congo was headed in the context of both the developments in the colony and the surrounding British and French colonies. He went back to the transfer of the Congo Free State to Belgium recalling how the colony was formed by Belgian capital, the church and the colonial administration. A lot of money had been made and the economic set up – if continued he wrote – would be greatly beneficial for a coming common European market. However, the colonial system had stagnated and could not provide for its own development. This was now sought remedied with the Catholic university and plans to educate a native elite. While it seemed to him that most whites in the colony had been genuinely surprised by the signs of growing ethnic nationalism, the firm control had after all brought the benefit that no communist problem existed since connections to the European left had not been allowed. On the backdrop of the increasing number of calls for domestic autonomy, he went on to classify Kasa Vubu, one of the more prominent ABAKO mayors in the Leopoldville province, as a potential future national leader. It was clear to him that these

171 Political Depeche from the Consular General to Belgian Congo, 4/12/1957, 121.K.1 Belgisk Kongo (my translation)

172 Political Depeche from the Consular General to Belgian Congo, 16/12/1957, 121.K.1 Belgisk Kongo (my translation)

mayors would establish themselves as a as a new political force and thereby eventually come to challenge the other three pillars of power. The church had already begun the process of adaptation and signalled that it was better to move a little ahead of time than to be delayed. Whether the capital and the administration would follow suit was to be seen. If Congo were to become independent, before time or not, he thought Pétillon was the man to be in charge of another 'Belgian miracle in Congo'.¹⁷³

While realising that things could change quickly, the Danish diplomat of course still sought to look after Danish business interests. From October 1957 to March 1959 he gave information on and connected Danish and colonial companies that were exporting and importing butter, condensed milk, skim milk and cream powder. However, he also sought to cater for the larger companies. A classified notice mentioning that the interest organisation of the shipping industry had been given four copies of the report 'Congo at a crossroads' and a note of appreciation from *Dafra* six months later revealed this. The handover of the foreign ministerial reports not to be seen outside the ministry had been arranged through a phone call to the organisation from the ministry after he had asked the ministry specifically to pass on the report to the EAC, *A.P. Møller* and *Dafra*. According to the note, the companies fully understood that both the report and the fact that it had been forwarded had to be kept secret. The second note suggests that it was not the first or last time official documents were forwarded to the Danish companies with interests in Congo.¹⁷⁴ Sandager-Jeppesen also took matters into his own hands as it appears that he was able to organise that the delegation of journalists from Belgian Congo that was going to Sweden by invitation of export oriented companies in September 1959 also came by Denmark more or less on his own and within just a month. The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised the programme so the journalists visited the relevant companies near Copenhagen, Århus and Odense and finished with an exquisite parliament dinner brought in from a luxury hotel with all relevant people present from the lobby organisations, the press heavy weights and some of the people from the 1956 delegation to the beer, pharmaceutical, dairy, refridgerating and canned food companies that were interested in getting established in the colony.¹⁷⁵

173 Political Depeche from the Consular General to Belgian Congo, 11/7/1958

174 The industrial lobby organisation to the foreign ministry 5/10/1957, the foreign ministry to the Consular General in Belgian Congo March 1958, the Consular General in Belgian Congo to the foreign ministry, 4/3/1959 and 28/11/1959, 66.C.Belgien Kolonier.10 Mælk og fløde, note from the foreign ministry to the shipping industry's interest organisation, the Danish Steamship Association, on the 21/7/1958 and another from *Dafra* to the foreign ministry, 25/1/1959

175 All references come from 112.U.3 Belgien, Belgiske journalister besøg i København i forbindelse med belgisk koloniudstilling i KBH, oktober-november 1957: The Consular General to Belgian Congo to the foreign ministry, 24/6/1959 and 29/7/1959, the foreign ministry to the provincial trade association in Odense, 9/9/1959, Hotel Richmond to the foreign ministry, 12/9/1959 and 13/9/1959, un-dated internal note on the program of the delegation, internal ministerial note from Political Legal Office to the Press Agency, 18/9/1959 and The Consular General to Belgian Congo to the foreign ministry, 5/11/1959

CHAOS: The international press takes over public discursive space, 1959-1960

The international discourse on Congo changed from 1959 to 1960. The Belgian paternalist narrative, present in Belgian popular culture, politics and media as a counter image and internationally as a developmental framework to prepare the 'still evolving' Congolese, was challenged from within by mainly *MNC* and Patrice Lumumba as the main narrator on its own modernist terms and externally with the US adding a cold war framework the Belgians was not yet themselves fully committed to. Lumumba, however, was short of credibility in the West, the reason why Belgians and the Americans succeeded in equalling Congo to 'Chaos'. The media in most of Western Europe followed suit.¹⁷⁶

This also turned out to be the case in Denmark, save a little cadre of journalists working with news from 'abroad'. As mentioned in the section on published sources, only a few of the articles published in 1959 and 1960 were written as independent analyses by this small elite of journalists working on international matters. Of these a few are noteworthy. *Politiken* brought an article by John Danstrup that put Belgian colonialism as the cause of the internal conflicts, but also abandoned the phrase of tribes, and found the Congolese internal agendas increasingly occupying the Belgian agenda. Peter Dalhoff wrote an article just after the *MNC* had won the majority of seats in the parliament in which he pointed to the risk of chaos and even a stillborn independent Congo, although he placed the responsibility on the lack of foresight in colonial policies. The centre-right paper *Information* brought an article by Adolph Rastén attributing the Belgian government's crisis to the lack of attention that had been paid Congo and thereby pointed to the dialectical relationship between coloniser and colonised. Just prior to Congolese independence, the Danish-Israeli freelance journalist, 1948 Israeli 'independence war' veteran and Israeli 'travelling' intelligence agent, Herbert Pundik, sent home two articles from Congo to *Information* as the only Danish journalist to do so. He chastised Belgium for having done little to prepare Congo for independence with a failed paternalistic colonial philosophy and explicitly argued that no sympathy should be granted the Europeans escaping while Congo was disintegrating.¹⁷⁷ The differences between the papers were visible with regard to political orientations as some five decades earlier, but less so when it came to the counter image of the 'African' and specifically 'the Congolese'. All newspapers often relied on the same sources, something that showed except in the editorials. The discourse of chaos was clearly adopted from the press bureau material along with the focus on the white refugees.¹⁷⁸ The aforementioned small group of journalists and their editors provided the few nuances in the press landscape otherwise taking its cues from Belgian and American discourses as information was sought from the American, French and British press bureaus by all newspapers.¹⁷⁹

176 Dunn, Kevin C. (2003) pp. 61-103

177 Andersen, Edvard (1960), Dalhoff, Peter (1959), Dalhoff Peter (1960a), Danstrup, John (1959), Danstrup, John (1960a), Danstrup, John (1960b), Hvidtfelt, Arild (1959), Pundik, Herbert (1960a) Pundik, Herbert (1960b), Rastén, Adolph (1959) and Rastén, Adolph (1960)

178 See for instance Berlingske Tidende 06/01/1959, Politiken 06/01/1959 and 09/01/1959, Berlingske Tidende 12/01/1959, Politiken 14/01/1959, Berlingske Tidende 02/11/1959, Aktuelt 16/01/1960, Aktuelt 17/01/1960, Berlingske Tidende 08/06/1960 and Berlingske Tidende 18/06/1960

179 For the complete list of articles on Belgian Congo in the Danish press see p. 66-70

Leopoldville, Brussels, Copenhagen, Lisboa and London, 1959-1960

The two Danish diplomats informing the foreign ministry on developments in Belgium and Belgian Congo didn't connect with the chaos discourse. Sandager-Jeppesen in Leopoldville had a feeling for the situation in the Belgian colony and described, as he saw it evolving as a failed paternalist colonial policy, the shaping of a misplaced 'Algier' mentality amongst the least educated settlers, a 'cold war' between the colonial leadership and the new Congolese leaders, the Belgian illusion of a Belgian-Congolese community and finally displayed a critical attitude towards the giant corporations pulling too many strings behind the facade. Tillitse in Brussels on the other hand was echoing Brussels having been too close to the Belgians for a number of years, their declarations of intentions, commissions and speeches based on castles in the air rather than events in the colony. He was little aware of the major capital transfers or at least failed to report on them. Beyond international press articles and reports from Sandager-Jeppesen and Tillitse the Danish foreign ministry only had Belgian supplied materials in 1959 to make assessments on.¹⁸⁰

By 1960 different NATO delegations, the Americans and British as well as the intelligence section of the Danish Defence Staff were also giving their thoughts on the future of Belgian Congo and how to understand the Communist threat. The Danish embassies in Lisboa, London and Brussels sent contributions on Katanga's talks with the Central African Federation, how the French were also showing an interest in buying Congo after its independence on the basis of a century old 'buy first' clause and how Congo was increasingly by all colonial powers seen as key to the future of (sub-Saharan) Africa. The information flows on Sub-Saharan Africa seem to have been relatively similar with common concepts as 'pioneers', 'modernisation', 'development' versus that of 'communism' although there was a general sense in the reports that the problems would be bigger in the 'settler' states as well as in the Portuguese colonies. While Belgian Congo appears not to have been seen as a settler state, reports on the degrading rule of law, breakdown in the means of communication and the disintegration of the 'new' Congolese state came in following independence. Some level of general confusion within the ministry of where Congo was headed and how to handle it with regard to trade seems to have been the result of the different input. Congo was hence the first sub-Saharan African country to receive a ministerial guide for Danish exporters in 1960, but was at the same time completely ignored in the 1960 report of the foreign ministry restructuring commission of 1957 also while the trade volumes of no importance with Guinea and Togo were.¹⁸¹ Within 1960 Congo fell behind Ghana and British East Africa tradewise and

180 Political Depeches from the Consular General to Belgian Congo, 8/1/1959, 15/1/1959, 2/7/1959 and 8/11/1959 and Political Depeches from the ambassador to Belgium, 12/1/1959, 19/1/1959, 8/9/1959

181 Political Depeches from the Consular General to Belgian Congo, 19/1/1960 and 19/5/1960, Political Depeches from the ambassador to Belgium, 12/3/1960, Political Depeche from the ambassador to Great Britain, 10/3/1960 and 31/3/1960, Danish NATO Representation, 9/3/1960, intelligence brief on Belgian Congo by the the Danish Defence Staff intelligence section, 12/2/1960, Udenrigsministeriets Tidsskrift for udenrigshandel og verdensøkonomi, no. 26, 1959, pp. 449-455, Vejledning for danske eksportører, February 1960, 65.I.29 Dan-Bel. Kol. Vejledning for danske eksportører, internal foreign ministerial brief, 10/1/1963, 65.I.29 Dan-Bel. Kol. Vejledning for danske eksportører, intelligence information brief from the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, 2/11/1959 and depeche from the Danish representation at NATO, 3/2/1960, 5.Q.45.A Kommunistisk infiltration i Afrika, the foreign ministry to all

in 1961 imports from Congo made up 0.07% of the Danish total and exports just 0.1%. Within the decade Congo had also fallen behind Nigeria, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Mozambique, Angola and Sudan. Mirroring this, the EAC failed to mention Congo in its annual account in 1959 and saw considerable losses the following year that were only just balanced in 1961.¹⁸²

Brief Summary

While Belgian Congo gradually changed for those living there from the Leopoldian rubber terror regime to a perhaps less harsh but equally invasive 'developmental' colonial corporate export economy, Danish public discourse didn't reflect this. Until the late 1950's the Congolese and other sub-Saharan Africans were not given much agency, and was even regarded as nations without a history not having given birth to a 'civilisation'. This reflected both general Danish and European stereotypical cognitive maps, the parallel lack of knowledge and accordingly understanding as well as an general European self image based on the all encompassing modernisation paradigm with mechanisation and spread of new technologies as key identifiers. Via influence from the press, school books and popular literature most Danes probably to some extent also followed the general European pro-colonial and civilisational discourses with the African and Congolese providing them with some specific counter images out of several. Following the end of the war the Belgians sought to benefit from the already existing narrative by connecting to the Danish 'pioneers' that worked for the two colonial regimes in Congo. However, from 1958 the Danish diplomat Sandager-Jeppesen and from 1959 also some journalists in the Danish press began to recognise the social transformations the various Congolese ethnic groups social structures, food production and legal systems had undergone.

Danish companies, initially those producing butter, canned foods, milk and cream powder slowly got into the trade with the Belgian colony. The trend over the years was generally growing although global processes were decisive. Imports or exports never exceeded the 1% mark. In 1919 the Belgian colony provided an enormous amount of palm seeds, however, as the oil mills imported few during the war highlighting the strong connection between the African colonies and the industrialising economies in Europe. From the 1950's machinery and pharmaceuticals joined the export lists. As the Belgian colonial policies and regime were gradually desintegrating Danish companies and the Danish state were still involved to the end trying to increase trade volumes, although volumes were still comparatively small, still below 1% of the annual totals. The Danish shipping companies on the other hand appears to have become an important part of the colonial economy feeding the rest of Europe Belgian colonial products.

diplomatic representations in sub-Saharan Africa, 11/5/1960, Political Depeche from the Ambassador to Portugal, 12/9/1960, Political Depeche from the Ambassador to the US, 24/4/1961, and Political Depeche from the Consular General to Belgian Congo, 24/10/1961, all in 5.Q.48.A Den politiske udvikling i Afrika

¹⁸² Udenrigsministeriets erhvervstjenestes oversigt over Afrikanske Stater, 1969, 65.I.29 Dan-Bel. Kol. Vejledning for danske eksportører, the Statistical department, Foreign trade of Denmark, 1959-1961 and the EAC's annual accounts for 1959-1961

All in all Denmark was useful for Belgium and its colonial policies, but never a critical component. The colonial setup ensured that. Openings in the colonial armour were only allowed to take place when external financing or political support was needed as the British in the 1920's and the Americans in the 1950's. However, important issues with regard to Danish colonial cooperation and self images remain unattended.

Epilogue

In this part I will seek to address the matter of how to understand and discuss Belgian Congo in Denmark and Denmark in Belgian Congo. Danish relations with the Belgian Congo were not crucial for neither the colonial project nor for the Danish national economy. This much is clear. On the other hand, Denmark and Danish companies did take part in the Belgian colonial project. To make it more clear: Danish imports of what was presumably Congolese cotton as well as oil cakes coming via Belgium only made up 1-2% of the total in these categories with most of these goods coming from the UK, its colonies in Asia and Germany in 1936 when the Congolese were dealing with famine.¹⁸³ Yet the question of how many Congolese died from hunger because the lands were used to produce these 1-2% of the total Danish cotton and oil cake imports instead of granting food remains important and unanswered. The point here is not whether Danish relations with the colonial apparatus and the colonial economy were large or small; there *were* relations, based in part on interests in making money and images of primitive Congolese and Africans. The interconnected paradigms of 20th century colonialism and modernity, or rather the narratives and self images of these, have prevented what '*we*' were part of to be fully acknowledged and accordingly become integrated in *our* national history. This has left us with a discrepancy in our perception of the European colonialism and the Danish direct or indirect participation. This mistaken pride needs to give way to reflective understanding.

My point of departure will be the thoughts of Berber Bevernage as he takes the works of Michel de Certeau, Christian Kvium and Eelco Runia further.¹⁸⁴ In his book, part on history, memory and state sponsored violence in Argentina, South Africa and Sierra Leone, and part philosophy, Bevernage deals with the question of time and temporality in the work of academic historians. He contends it is "*not sterile sophistry, but that it has real social relevance*"¹⁸⁵ as one's sense of historical time defines how one deals with historical injustices and the ethics of history. A growing number of academic historians are realising that an insistence on an absolute break between past and present has actively promoted a temporal distance often pitting history against memory; Historical discourses, it follows, are far from being neutral descriptions. Bevernage has therefore called for an alternative sense of historical time or

183 The Statistical department, Foreign trade of Denmark, 1936

184 Certeau, Michel de (1988) pp. 4-5, Kvium, Christian (2008) p. 81-107 and Runia, Eelco (2006) pp. 1-29.

185 Bevernage, Berber (forthcoming, 2011) p. v

temporality on the basis of the philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch's notion of 'the irrevocable past' with the aim of not getting caught in either opposing side of the irreversible time of history or the mythically reversible time of jurisdiction. This way the past would be allowed to be part of the present in form of for instance memory and conflict. How this temporality should be come about is not only the work of historians he argues, it is also a political dilemma that requires active debate.¹⁸⁶ What has become broadly categorised under 'memory' is the other dimension of Bevernage's alternative sense of historical time, also essential to my undertaking.

The relationships between memory and history

The academic focus on memory mainly came with the work done on and with holocaust survivors but has since then become omnipresent both inside and outside academia for better and worse. To me there is little doubt in the importance of memory, but not all memories are as essential as those of 'scars' from wars, torture, contemporary state repression and colonialism to mention just some pasts not yet gone. Moreover, what some politicians try to label memory is little more than political rhetoric as the philosopher Tzvetan Todorov has pointed out.¹⁸⁷ An important point made by Elizabeth Jelin on the nexus between academic history and memory is that they are not defined through only one relationship. A point I think has global plausability as there are perhaps as many relations between history and memory as there are individuals. Memory is social and collective, but also individual. The estimated 80.000-120.000 Korean women kidnapped by the Japanese army to become sexual slaves each on their own and all collectively remember WW II very differently than do Japanese, German or Australian and American children that saw their fathers leave for war - also individually or as a group - as do Korea, Australia and the US compared to Japan especially with regard to public narratives and official commemorative discourses.¹⁸⁸ The various people that experienced Belgian colonialism in Congo or Portugese in Angola and Mozambique also remembers it differently from those part of the colonial apparatus.

A source of inspiration for me with regard to the quest for an alternative historical time is the discipline of indigenous studies. In Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US “*where colonisation has not ceased to exist; it has only changed in form (...)*”¹⁸⁹ it is providing of a forum for dialogue that take into account both historical injustice and the ethics of history. As William Gallois has pointed out: “*All discussions of Australian history are of necessity moral enterprises.*”¹⁹⁰ I find his point valid for not just all of the former British colonies mentioned, but far beyond. Historians and anthropologists from the discipline of indigenous studies and others have for some years now been engaged not only in public debate, but also been taken into account as expert witnesses in legal cases and as experts on media

186 Op cit. pp. 4-189

187 Todorov, Tzvetan (2003) p. 175

188 Jelin, Elizabeth (2003) p. 59.

189 Moreton-Robinson, Aileen (2009) p. 11

190 Gallois, William (2007) pp. 148-167

productions and begun to challenge their own temporal conceptions of past, present and future.¹⁹¹ Things seem generally also to be changing both in the public(s) and academic history both for the better and worse in many places in the 'West'. This temporal or performative turn as Berber Bevernage has called it, might allow for a new contemporary history with a balance between the different senses of time. Global history and the turn of historians to psychology and biographies are perhaps expressions of this dialogue?

European and Belgian colonialism in 2011

With regard to European imperialism and colonialism, academic historical literature has for decades been written on the political, economic and cultural dimensions and has by now moved beyond monocausality and linear explanations. Progress has also been made with regards to the histories and perspectives of the colonised and how their material conditions, social structures and livelihoods were affected and how some from local populations took part in this. Africans are now also recognised as being just as open to taking part in slavery and racist enterprises as Europeans and Arabs. Movies have been made and shown in the public realms, exhibitions held and slowly text book materials for education in schools seem to be changing. Yet despite these efforts and achievements, most Europeans and other 'Westeners', still fail to see beyond the primitive colonial stereotypes previously established along with the successors of modernisation and development theories and - somewhat simply put but nonetheless - see the entire continent of Africa and its peoples only as singular, as a failure and in need of our help. Moreover, keeping in mind Stephen Ellis' point on the necessity of seeing all African history of the decades since legal independence as the makings not only of colonial policies, but also deeper African historical trajectories¹⁹², French President Sarkozy's ignorant and simplistic speech during his first visit to Africa as president in 2007¹⁹³ confirmed the extent of the continued pervasiveness of these ideas into the highest levels of power in Europe. Debates on historical injustices are also still far from mainstream in Europe and an irrevocable past far from challenging the existing division between what is considered past, present and future. One might even call the past largely absent despite the presence of millions of Africans in Europe very much living reminders of the colonial past.

The Belgian debate on historical injustice, the ethics of history and the notion of the irrevocable past in relation to Belgian Congo has been and is still marked by both a general lack of knowledge and general disinterest. When Congo became 'independent' the centres of African and colonial studies at the universities in Antwerp and Leuven were dismantled or transformed into politically harmless linguistic, geological and agricultural sciences as in Ghent and the Royal Museum for Central Africa and accordingly Congo fell out of the school curriculums. Although academic historians both in Belgium and abroad gradually got around the Belgian colonial history in some areas over the following three decades,

191 See for instance **Curthoys, Ann, Genovese, Ann and Reilly, Alexander** (2008)

192 **Ellis, Stephen** (2002) pp. 1-26, **Hawk, Beverly G.** (1992) pp. 1-14

193 Address by Mr. Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, at the University at Cheik Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal, on 26 July 2007

as can be seen in the material I draw upon in the first part, there was no public debate. The former colonial officials were silent feeling forgotten and ill-deserving of the criticism from the Congolese in 1960, the older generations of the Belgian population knew only the colonial propaganda while the younger ones knew close to nothing and developed no interest. So a silent majority without interests, the lack of communicating research to the broader public and a political environment more interested in keeping history unknown has kept things this way for years. Only in the past decade has a partial debate been initiated as Adam Hochschild's famous book¹⁹⁴, a documentary on the Leopoldian regime, a book on the murder of Patrice Lumumba by Ludo De Witte¹⁹⁵ and a Royal Museum exhibition led to some controversy. A parliamentary commission with federal politicians and academics to look into the controversy of his murder was accordingly established (before the Royal Museum exhibition). It brought little new understandings, however, and did more to calm unstable waters than to get closer to addressing historical injustices. It is indicative that for many years Jan Vansina and Daniel Vangroenweghe - who more than any other Belgian historians have contributed to laying bare the darker dimensions of the colonial past - were known only as anthropologists (which they also are). The Congolese born and partly trained historian, now professor of African history in the US, Osumaka Likaka, who, in some respects along with Jan Vansina, seems to have gotten the closest to giving a forum for voices from the Congolese irrevocable past and showed the autonomy of Congolese thought with his latest book, *Naming Colonialism, History and Collective Memory in the Congo, 1870-1960*. He collected both the generic and unique names in 280 languages given to Belgian employed and Belgian colonial officials within the Central African namegiving tradition - reflecting the namebearers' moral flaws as well as qualities - and showed their meaningfulness through the contexts and experiences of 'military' operations, tax collections, impoverishment, forced labour and punishment in relation to cash crop production, road construction, mining and imprisonment. Even more illustrative is how many Belgian cities still have parks, avenues, streets and monuments named after Leopold, colonial pioneers or other names making references to the colonial period, even paying tribute to the great efforts of the Belgians.¹⁹⁶

Danish relations with Belgian colonialism

Coming to terms with Danish relations with Belgian colonialism and thereby join Bevernage's quest for an alternative historical time and a reflection on historical injustices is not straight forward as the Belgians themselves largely still see their colonial past as past and not part of the present. Yet, it is not impossible. Interesting work has already been initiated. The work by Peter Tygesen, the anthology on people from Bornholm and Congo and the joint Nordic 2006/2007 exhibition "The Nordic countries in the Congo - Congo in the Nordic countries", the related articles, museum homepage¹⁹⁷ and international

194 Hochschild, Adam (1999)

195 De Witte, Ludo (2001)

196 Bevernage, Berber (2011) pp. 300-311, Castryck, Geert (2006) pp. 71-88, Cathrine, Lucas (2006) pp. 11-120, Dembour, Marie-Bénédicte (2000) pp. 1-208 and Likaka, Osumaka (2009) pp. 3-162

197 <http://congo.natmus.dk/index.htm>

network are all efforts part of that. The histories of the 400-500 Danish individuals that left Denmark to work for the Leopoldian regime are being told in the larger context. It is necessary to look further into the Danish relations - or collaboration if you will, money was after all made during and from an occupation - with Belgian colonialism on its own as I have sought to do, albeit in a very general manner.

Hopefully 'setting the records straight' is not out of reach. Rather than a single well defined case with a company or a few individual Danes working for the Belgian colony or one of the corporations, the option chosen instead has allowed for a longer and broader perspective in the attempt to open up for the opportunity of addressing the Danish relations with Belgian colonialism in a larger context then and in relation to both public debate and education now. That the Danish public discourse and the Danes were just as racist as the Belgians is clear. The Belgians had little difficulties playing the 'pioneer' card to get the interest of the Danish foreign ministry and the built in support for their colonialist discourses and practices. That Danish companies such as *Dafra*, *Aarhus Oliefabrik*, *EAC*, *Erik Emborg*, Copenhagen Butter Packing Company and *Dansk Riffel Syndikat* and others sought either directly or indirectly through agents in Antwerp to profit from the Belgian colonial project is also clear. Denmark and Danish companies did take part in the horrible Belgian colonial project. In 1955 the initiative was clearly also Danish, not Belgian. Moreover, it also has to be noted that only circumstances outside Danish reach kept the existing relations from intensifying from 1900 to 1960. It would be interesting to compare with Norway and Sweden, as is so often done, with regard to the collaboration with Belgian Congo. Further research therefore needs to shed light on all these different dimensions to bring them to the 'present'. For instance to connect *Aarhus Oliefabrik* and the factory locations and their products directly to Belgian Colonialism and the areas in which people were growing and harvesting the cotton. There are different ways this could be sought done: a public panel debate with historians, journalists, politicians, business people and representatives from the company, educational sessions for high school classes and following group work, student made exhibitons at either the State Library, University Library or City Library with the participation or oral interviews of Congolese plantation workers from the late 1950's if possible. The aim would not be to seek an apology or create a sense of guilt or remorse, rather, it would be to connect the Danes to the peoples and places of Belgian Congo to further an understanding of a irrevocable past.

However, Denmark and Danish companies also supported and took part in the British, French and Portugese colonial projects in Africa, East Asia as well as South East Asia in a similar fashion as Belgian colonialism. As the Danish economic historian Per Boje has remarked in general: "*There is hence no reason only to take interest in the heroes of the market economy. The bad guys are also part of business life (...)*"¹⁹⁸ Political stability, both under colonialism and dictatorships, has often meant good chances of making money. Many companies also profitted from their dealings with the occupying German army during WW II to mention just some other less glorious parts of Danish political, economic

198 **Boje, Per** (2007) pp. 88-101

and business history. The EAC had also been expanding its operations Asia from its establishment and had Prince Axel, who had been part of an attempt to overthrow the Danish unity government during WW II, as its CEO and board chairman for many years. The Great Northern Telegraph Company had been doing business in imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and fascist Japan. *Aarhus Oliefabrik* with its nazi sympathising CEO Thorkild Juncker and the canned food company *Beauvais* that more than likely both were directly or indirectly involved in the trade with the Belgian colony also made it to the Danish state attorney's post WW II list of collaborationists. As did the weapons company *Dansk Riffel Syndikat* that had sold weapons to the *Force Publique* during WW I. The refrigerating company *Atlas* and the ship yard *B&W* that both wanted to get into Congo in 1956 had also been on the list. The entrepreneurial company Christiani & Nielsen that along with its competitor Kampsax turned down the chance to build more than 2.000 homes as part of the Belgian 10-year plan for Congo was also on the list. The EAC had also from 1909 to 1918 sought to buy *Aarhus Oliefabrik* and Christiani and Nielsen had been responsible for constructing parts of the factory for *Aarhus Oliefabrik*. Denmark was small and these companies amongst the biggest, so this is little surprise.¹⁹⁹

My point here is that it is necessary to seek to understand the collaboration with Belgian colonialism not only on its own but also in a longer and broader perspective. The three volumes in the series on history of the Danish foreign policy over the 19th and 20th centuries published in 2003, 2004 and 2005 provided much needed archival based general narratives for their respective periods. However, trade and general relations with the colonies on the African continent were not of any independent or deeper interest, nor were the decolonisation processes. If included they were mainly within the European context as singular and mainly European processes rather than as North/South dimensions of both colonialism, the globalising cold war and processes in their own right with both local as well as global driving forces and implications. The North/South dimension of the 19th and 20th centuries was only covered in small sections on the problems of the Third World and development aid.²⁰⁰ However, one cannot by any standard reduce Danish relations to any African country to development aid only, the trade with Belgian Congo and the other colonies made reference to cases in point. Similarly with Danish relations with Asian and South American peoples, countries and economies, why certain important global aspects via connections, networks and relations remain not understood despite the big efforts put into the volume.

We therefore need a globalised history of Denmark, one that is focused on both comparisons as well as connections and with an alternative historical time that challenges the narrow ontological and epistemological frameworks of national history that is still largely status quo today. Global history in the way as promoted by the CCC research unit in the history department at the university of Ghent²⁰¹ with

199 Højbo, Flemming (1993) pp. 36-48, Jacobsen, Kurt (2003) pp. 174-194, Jensen, Christian, Kristiansen, Tomas and Nielsen, Karl Erik (2000) pp. 202-235 and Kragelund, Poul (1996) pp. 38-40

200 Lidegaard, Bo (2003), Olesen, Thorsten Borring and Villaume, Poul (2006) and Bach, Christian Friis, Olesen, Thorsten Borring, Kaur-Pedersen, Sune and Pedersen, Jan (2008)

201 <http://www.ccc.ugent.be/roots>

the foci of communities, comparisons, and connections opens up for this. The inclusion of the 'receiving ends' of Danish foreign policy could be one dimension of this new global history of Denmark. The connections which Danish companies were part of could be another. The impact of modernity on Denmark with discourses, mindsets, ways of organising social and economic life in comparison with other 'Western countries' could be another dimension. We need to 'set *our* records straight' by connecting peoples as well as places and make these relations meaningful in order to increase an understanding that would go beyond the conventional Western national history and its fascination of modernity, progress, development and superiority that for too long has dominated around the world. To promote for dialogue with memories via a sense of time that gives space for irrevocable pasts. This change is long overdue.

Conclusion

I have sought to outline both the public and private Danish relations within and in relation to Belgian Congo and document the image of the colony in the Danish public sphere in order to discuss both the Danish role in Belgian colonialism, the discrepancy between this and the images of it in Denmark and propose a way to discuss and understand it.

It should be clear that Danish products in small but growing numbers made it to the colony and that imports from the colony were also growing steadily, both with ups and downs due WW I, 'the depression' and WW II. Danish products were initially only food products, but from the late 1950's products began to mirror the increasing mechanisation and sophistication of the Danish economy adding machinery and pharmaceutical products to the list of goods exported to Congo. The trade adventure that Denmark sought to initiate in 1955 would have promoted this trend, but with the turn of events following Congolese independence it never materialised. Consistent interest in the foreign ministry in developing the ties further were prevalent and had it not been for the wars and the paradigmatic economic crisis contacts between the Belgian Congo and Denmark may have intensified. However, this collaboration with Belgian colonialism was not seen as such in Denmark, but merely as trade due to the narratives of the Danish 'pioneers', 'developmental colonialism' and modernisation of the Belgian colonial policies as well as the broader European pro-colonial discourses.

In the discussion I have argued in favour of not only further research into the collaboration with the Belgian colony, but also the other European colonialisms as well as the need for a new globalised history of Denmark on the basis of Berber Bevernages concept of an irrevocable past so to accommodate the different peoples and places Denmark and Danish people and companies have encountered, for good and bad. The aim of a globalised history of Denmark would not be to promote the call for apologies or to install a sense of guilt, but rather to increase knowledge and thereby understanding. In this way I promote history as a way of sharing, a dialogue and maintain, in line with Berber Bevernage, that history is not *'sterile sophistry, but that it has real social relevance'*. History is a lived past, and in some cases one not yet gone.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

The missing records are all from the Foreign Ministry series 002 Udenrigsministeriet, Gruppeordnede Sager 1945-1972:(I cross referenced with the Danish Foreign Ministry's handover register covering 1909-1965, boxes 43, 50 and 51)

- 73.D.164: Danmark—Kongo: Vareudveksling 1960-1966,
- 112.T.1/Belgiens kolonier: Presseforhold, 1960
- 113.D.31/Belgiens kolonier: Fordelingen af Informaciones Daneses, 1956
- 113.D.32/Belgiens kolonier: Fordelingen af Revue Danoise, 1955-1956
- 113.D.55/Belgiens kolonier: Belgiens kolonier, 1956-1958
- 113.D.125A.Dan Danmark: Håndbogen 'Le Danmark' fransk udgave, 1954-1955
- 113.D.125.H.Danmark: Hæftet 'Le Danmark'. Særtryk, 1955-1972
- 113.L.1/Belgiens kolonier: Oplysningsarbejdet i Danmark, 1950-1956
- 115.G.7/Belgiens kolonier: Belgiens kolonier: Afsætningsmuligheder for dansk film, markedsforhold i almindelighed, 1952-1952

Appendix 2:

Danish trade relations with sub-Saharan Africa in 1959 DKK (except Belgian Congo, 1958 DKK)²⁰²

Country/colony	Danish imports (1959)	Danish exports (1959)
The South African Union	15 mill. DKR	28,6 mill. DKR
Belgian Congo	11,4 mill. DKR	16,8 mill. DKR (1958)
Mozambique and Angola	10 mill. DKR	16,3 mill. DKR
Nigeria	50 mill. DKR	14,4 mill. DKR
Ghana	21 mill. DKR	11,5 mill. DKR
Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika	25 mill. DKR	11,3 mill. DKR
Senegal, Mali, Mauretania, Ivory Coast, Upper Volta, Dahomey and Niger (Former French West Africa)	17 mill. DKR	5 mill. DKR
The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland	8 mill. DKR	3,5 mill. DKR
Sierra Leone and Gambia	0,5 mill. DKR	3 mill. DKR
Senegal, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo and Gabon (Former French Equatorial Africa)	13 mill. DKR	3 mill. DKR
Madagascar and Reunion	---	2 mill. DKR
Cameroun	1 mill. DKR	1,8 mill. DKR
South West Africa	0,4 mill. DKR	0,4 mill. DKR
Ethiopia	0,5 mill. DKR	2,2 mill. DKR
Somalia and French Somaliland	---	0,6 mill. DKR
Guinea	---	0,5 mill. DKR
Togo	---	0,1 mill. DKR

202 Bilag til Betænkning afgivet af Kommissionen af 25. oktober 1957 om Udenrigstjenesten, nr. 270, 1960, pp. 44-49 and Udenrigsministeriets Tidsskrift for udenrigshandel og verdensøkonomi, no. 26, 1959, pp. 449-455