

8-82

A F R I C A N
P E R S P E C T I V E S

An exchange of essays
on the economic geography of
nine African states

Assembled and organized by

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8. Congo

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Comprising 1.1 percent of the land area (346,000 square kilometers) and 0.3 percent of the population (1.4 million) of the continent, the Congo occupies a modest place in Africa. This physiographically heterogeneous territory is populated by Bantu peoples whose sole shared language is French, inherited from the former colonial regime.

Largely due to unfavorable climatic and other natural conditions, population growth in the region has always been inhibited. Thus Congo has never attained a level of development comparable to that of the countries of the lower Nile, other parts of North Africa, or the Sudan. Additionally, the country has suffered from its isolation and remoteness from the main-streams of change and progress in the Atlantic sphere of Africa.

It was as late as 1880 that Congo was colonized by France and, after the beginning of the present century, it became the key territory in French Equatorial Africa, as it included the regional capital. Consequently it was less neglected than the interior territories. However, France's development policies involved failures in continuity, funding, and technology. Some economic advantage was derived from the country's crucial land routes into the interior (vehicular roads and later a railroad) which connected the Atlantic coast to navigable segments of the Congo River. Only after World War II, however, did Congo experience some real economic development, which accelerated somewhat after independence was achieved in 1960. Today Congo remains the most highly urbanized and best educated country of former French Equatorial Africa.

After a neocolonial period during the first 3 years of independence, Congo began to move toward socialism. A state-controlled economic sector, created by means of the widespread nationalization of existing establish-

ments, was badly managed and proved ruinous to public finances. The private sector, however, continues to prosper if well managed, and is still controlled by foreign capital. Newly discovered and important petroleum resources have induced the government to embark upon a series of Three-Year Plans to accelerate the socialization of the economy.

PHYSICAL SETTING

Congo ranks number 26 in territorial size among Africa's 53 countries. It constitutes a wedge-shaped territory that broadens from the Atlantic coast into the interior, stretching along the Zaire River and toward the banks of its tributary, the Ubangi. Thus most of the country forms part of the Zaire River basin, although it is separated from the Atlantic coast by a zone of higher elevation that impedes surface communications. Congo's physiographic regions tend to extend into neighboring countries, with which it shares the basins of several rivers.

A cross-section from southwest to northeast presents a succession of major regions (Figs. 8.1 and 8.2). The sedimentary coastal basin is a narrow zone (20 to 60 km.) of smooth hills and minor plateaus that rise from 90 to 120 m above sea level. They consist of sandstone, sands, and clays and are grooved deeply by wide swampy valleys filled with quaternary alluvium. The *Mayombe* is a mountain chain of ancient metamorphics, extending from southeast to northwest and embedded with small granitic masses. Elevations are low (rarely exceeding 800 m) although Mt. Fountouti, the highest point, reaches 930 m. This region is only 30 to 60 km wide, but it constitutes a formidable obstacle against penetration into the interior. The Kouilou-Niari River does traverse the Mayombe, but its route is broken by gorges and rapids.

The Niari-Nyanga Synclinorium is a vast interior depression about 60 km wide and stretching over 325 km from Zaire to Gabon, Congo's coastal neighbors. It extends toward the east through the Valley of the Niari (a distinct subregion). Here schisto-calcareous plains prevail, with relatively rich soils and low relief (elevations lie between 120 and 225 m above sea level). In the western area lies a series of echelon ranges that parallel the Mayombe and are nearly as high (400-670 m). The Valley of the Niari is surrounded by two plateaus that descend with sometimes sheer scarps to the river level.

The Massif du Chaillu, a region that reaches its fullest development in adjacent Gabon, is a granitic complex with metamorphic units lying at 500 to 800 m covering an area of over 30,000 km². To the south and west lies a peripheral depression with underlying sandy soils, leading to the sedimentary terrain of the coast.

The Plateau of Cataracts (eastern segment) between Mindouli and Brazzaville constitutes an area of transition between the basins of the Niari and the Zaire Rivers. This plateau has been fragmented into a substantial

hill landscape, and the rivers cross it by means of cataracts and rapids.

The Bateke Plateaus and their approaches occupy the center of Congo. These plateaus vary from 600 to 860 m in elevation and are covered with sandy formations that have been eroded into deep valleys by the Zaire River and its tributaries, the Lefini, the N'Keni, and the Alima. The Zaire River flows through a narrow valley (from 1.5 to 3.0 km) over a 200 km stretch from M'Pouya to Stanley Pool.

The Congolese Cuvette (or Basin) consists of a large expanse (150,000 km²) of riverine and lacustrine alluvium. Its altitude varies from 280 m at M'Pouya to 380 m at the foothills of the surrounding uplands. Much of the basin is marshland and other easily flooded areas. The major tributaries of the Zaire River extend across this region and converge toward a stretch of the river between Mossaka and N'Keni, less than 100 km. These Zaire tributaries generally lie in valleys with steep banks, so that their water level is well below that of the land surface.

The Western Sangha actually consists of two physiographic regions. To the west of a line from Kelle to Souanke lie the upper basins of the Ivindo and Likouala Rivers. This is an area of granitic terrain with elevations ranging from 400 to 600 m, with some quartzite-sustained peaks rising higher. To the east of the line lie the Namemba Mountains, where elevations exceed 1000 m, the highest elevations in the country.

Climate

Although situated between 3° 38' N and 5° S, Congo is located to the south of the Thermic Equator. It is therefore subject to the regimes of the Southern Hemisphere, generally determined by the competition between the masses of oceanic air of the St. Helena Anticyclone and those of the persistent continental low pressure cell prevailing over the Zaire Basin, the climate is also influenced by the local relief just described, and by the vast expanses of forest that contribute to overall humidity through evapotranspiration. Precipitation occurs principally between October and April and the average temperature is 20° C. Two climatic regions, separated by the southern boundary of the Bateke Plateaus, may be identified: to the south of the Plateaus the Low Congolese climate prevails; and to the north is the forest-like Guinean climate (Fig. 8.3).

The Low Congolese climate is characterized by precipitation varying from less than 1200 millimeters in the Niari Depression to more than 2000 mm in the Mayombe and the Massif du Chaillu. Precipitation is about 1300 mm at Pointe Noire and 1370 at Brazzaville. The rains are distributed over two rainy seasons: October-December and the heavier February-April, separated by two dry seasons (the short dry season in January and the longer drought from June to September). The unreliability of this climatic pattern poses problems for agriculture. Temperature variations is comparatively low, ranging from 6° C. at Ponte-Noire to 4.5° at Brazzaville.

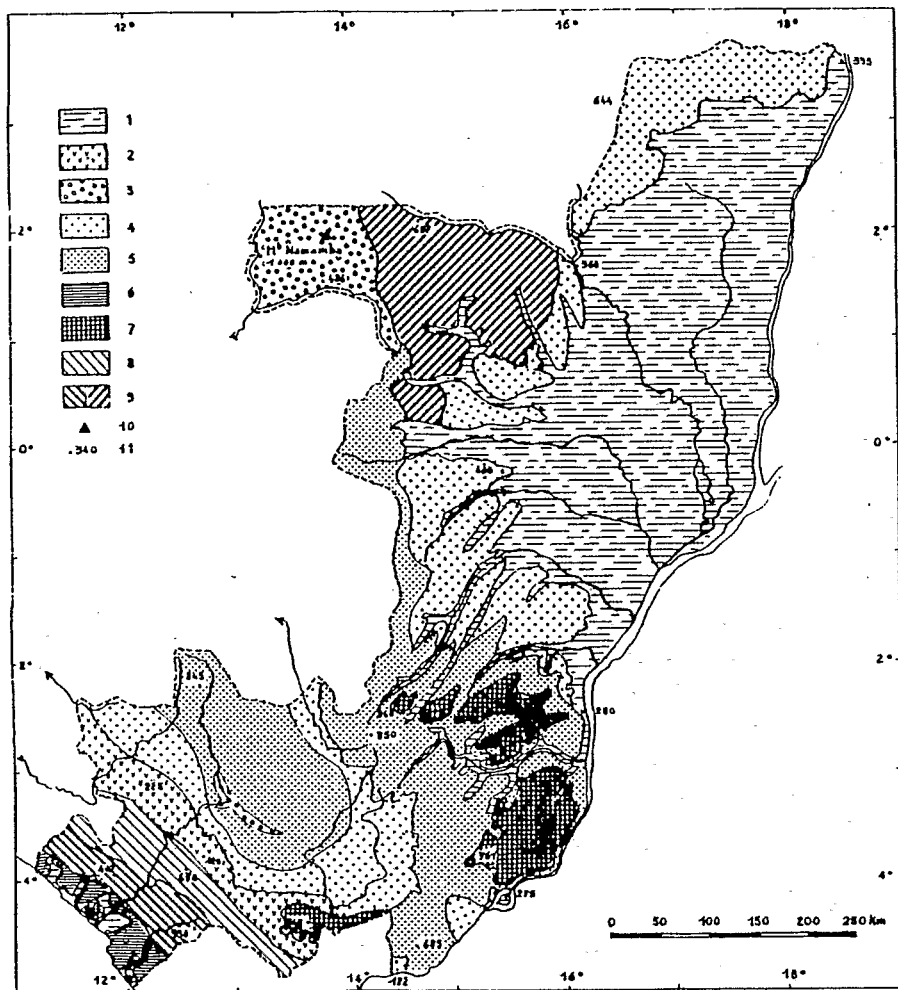


Fig. 8.1. Simplified Morphological Map of the Congo.
 1: alluvial plain. 2: Calcareous Terrain Plain. 3: depression in Granitic terrain. 4: low hills. 5: high hills. 6: low plateaus. 7: high plateaus. 8: relief of Secondary Chain of Mountains and direction of undulations. 9: Appalachian relief with direction of undulations. 10: isolated relief. 11: altitude in meters.

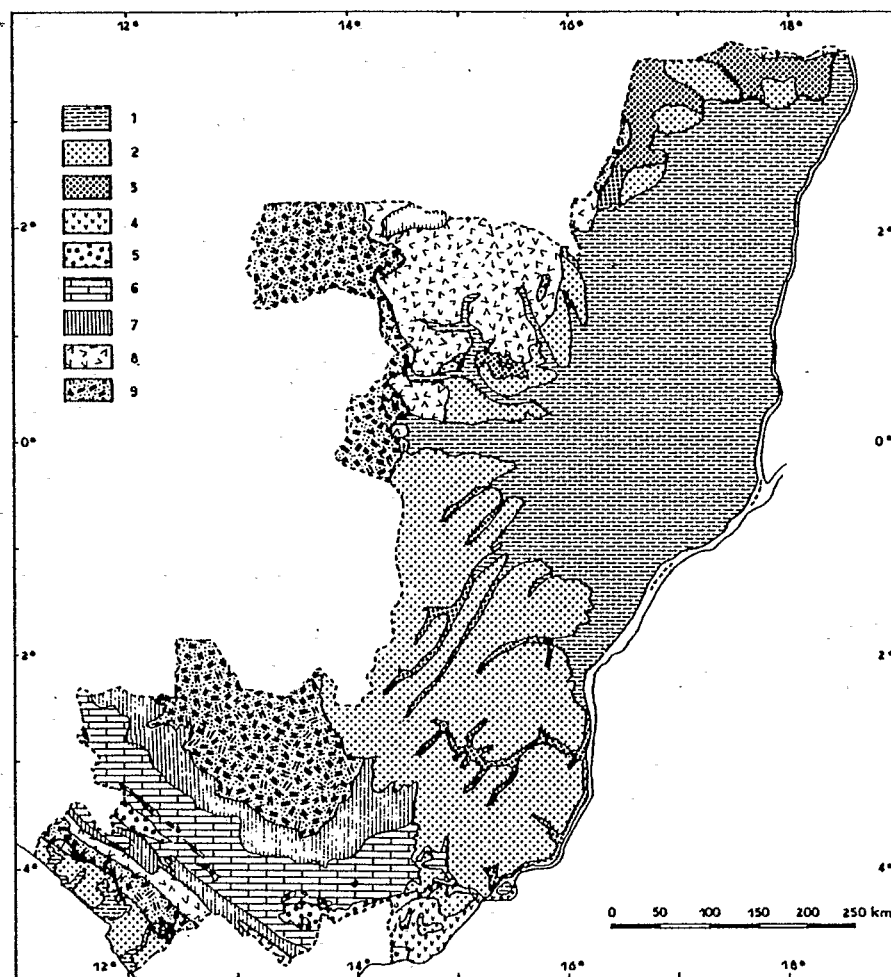


Fig. 8.2. Geology.
 1: Quaternary Period (Coastal Alluvium and sands). 2: Tertiary Period (sandstone and sands). 4: Upper Pre-Cambrian Period, series of the Inkisi (arkose, sandstone). 5: Upper Pre-Cambrian Period, series of the M'Pioka (clay, arkose and sandstone). 6: Upper Pre-Cambrian Period, schisto-calcareous series (clay, sandstone, calcareous). 7: Upper Pre-Cambrian Period, series of the Bouenza (Marly Calcareous, sandstone). 8: Middle Pre-Cambrian Period (sandstone and shale). 9: Lower Pre-Cambrian Period (granite and shale).

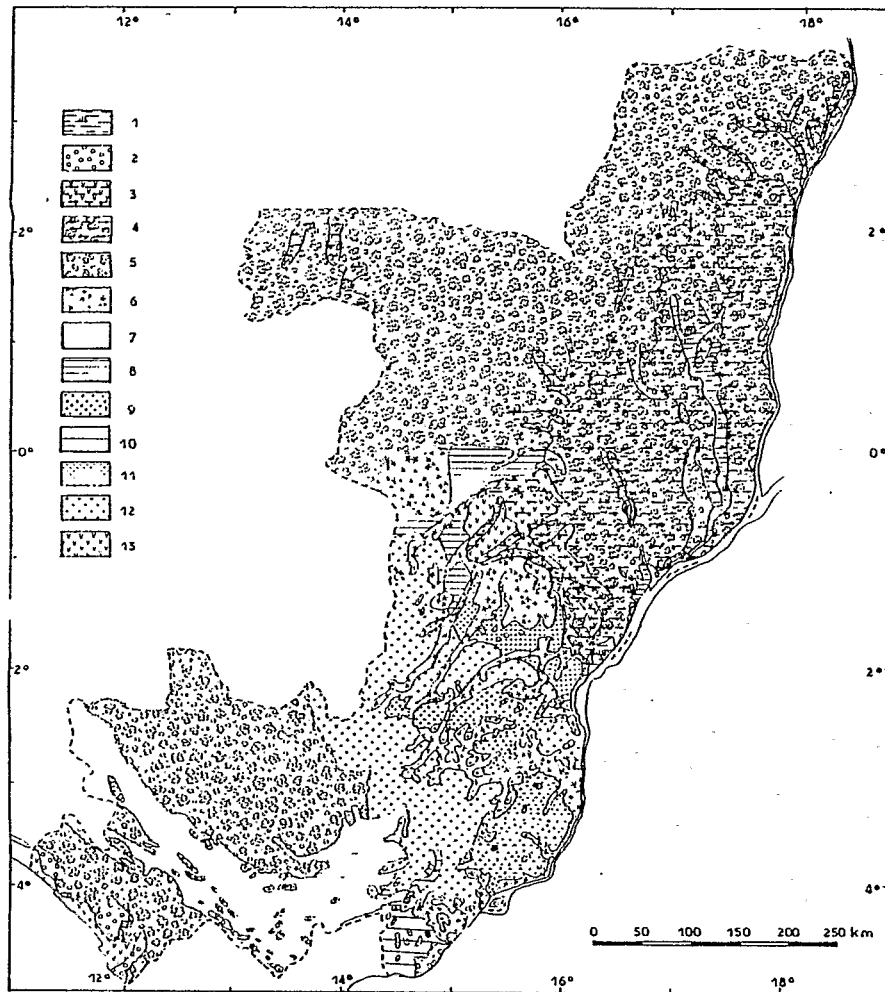


Fig. 8.3. Vegetation.

- 1: floating grass-lands. 2: papyri. 3: marsh-lands and swampy steppes. 4: flooded forest. 5: equatorial ombrophile forest. 6: mesophile forest. 7: *Hyparrhenia* Savanna. 8: *Andropogon* Savanna. 9: *Trachypogon* and *Hyparrhenia* Savanna. 10: *Aristida* Savanna. 11: *Trachypogon* Savanna. 12: *Loudetia* Savanna. 13: steppe.

The forest-like climate of Guinea is marked by higher precipitation (1500 to 2000 mm.), distributed more evenly throughout the year (although June and July tend to be dry months even here). Here the temperature range is even less: a mere 2.7° at Djambala and 1.5° at Impfondo.

Drainage and Hydrography

The watercourses of Congo (as elsewhere) are influenced crucially by the precipitation regimes and by the nature of the terrain. Only the Zaire

River and its major tributaries upriver from Stanley Pool are navigable. The Zaire River is navigable throughout the year because its level is sustained by numerous tributaries in its interior basin, producing a system of seasonal complementarity. Most major tributaries are navigable throughout the year; some always (the N'Keni, the Alima, and the Ubangi); others seasonally or intermittently, especially in their upper courses (the Likouala and the Sangha).

Several river basins, although not navigable or positioned unfavorably with respect to developing areas, present opportunities for the development of hydroelectric facilities, notably the Kouilou and the Loeme valleys.

Vegetation

Some 60 percent of the country's total area is covered by tropical forest, while the remainder lies under savanna and steppe vegetation. The equatorial *ombrophile* forest is the most widespread (Fig. 8.3), covering the Mayombe Chain, the Massif du Chaillu, some 120,000 km of Congo's northern zone, and a large number of smaller areas in the Niari Valley region and along the Zaire River. The forest consists of several dozen species of trees per hectare (such as iroko, limba, okoume), so that cultivation and exploitation are difficult. The *mesophile* forest exists in the hinterland of Brazzaville and constitutes galleries along the valleys of the Bateke Plateaus. And the *flooded* forest occupies about 40,000 km² of the basin, but is of little economic interest at present.

The steppe country occurs on the hills and minor plateaus in the coastal region, and it prevails also in southwestern areas of the Congolese Cuvette. The savannas extend across the Niari depression (where *hyparrhenia* makes cattle raising possible), the Plateau of Cataracts, the hills of the Bateke, and several river lowlands including the Alima and the upper Likouala.

Floating grasslands and papyri also occur in the swampy valleys of the Congolese Basin and along the Atlantic coastline.

Soils

Four principal soil types are found in Congo: *ferrallitics* (oxisols), *washed ferrallitics*, *weakly developed ferrallitics*, and *hydromorphic* soils.

The ferrallitic soils, typical oxisols, exist in the forested areas, on the older upland rocks, in heavily irrigated areas, and elsewhere in zones where rainfall exceeds 1500 mm annually. This soil is fragile, but good for certain crops, for example the cultivation of cocoa (Sangha).

The washed ferrallitic soils are most extensive in the Bateke and coastal regions. These soils are relatively fertile when found in areas under forest cover, but poor under savanna. Proper fertilization, however, can render these soils quite useful. Another technique to convert them to productive soils involves a special "washing" method carried on especially on the Koukouya Plateau.

The weak ferralitic soils are typical in the Niari valley. These soils have proved able to support mechanized agriculture of peanuts and sugar cane.

The hydromorphic soils occur in all regions subject to periodic flooding. Unless drained (when they can be very productive), they are of no value for farming.

FROM PRE-COLONIAL TIMES TO INDEPENDENCE

Except for the discovery of Congo's Atlantic coast by Portuguese seafarers at the end of the fifteenth century, the country was practically unknown to outsiders until the French arrived after 1880. At that time it was fragmented into small politico-geographical units (the Kingdoms of Loango and the Bateke), tribal areas, and the domains of clans.

France attempted to unify the area both politically and economically during the years of colonial rule. When the colonial period came to an end, the task was only partially completed.

The Pre-Colonial Situation (Before 1880)

Powerful and strongly organized states on the West African model never arose in the region of the Zaire Basin because of the hostile environment, the difficult communications and transportation, the sparse and scattered population, the frequent population movements. But two states, known since the fifteenth century, have been important in Congolese history: the Kingdom of Kongo (in Zaire) and the Kingdom of the Bateke (or Anzics). Missionaries and other described the Kongo Kingdom in considerable detail, but much less was discovered about the Kingdom of the Bateke (Fig. 8.4).

The Kingdom of Loango in Congo appears to have been a vassal state of the great Kingdom of Kongo. According to oral tradition it extended from the Tchiloango River to Mayumba Lake and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Bateke Kingdom, thus encircling the area of Mayombe and Western Niari. However, by the time the first European merchants and missionaries became established on what is now Congo's coast, the Kingdom of Loango was in decay. No descriptions of the state in its heyday have become available. The Bateke Kingdom, too, was past its prime when the Europeans first settled. The Bateke kings had lost control over the copper mines (copper coins were in circulation), and during the nineteenth century the state was in the process of breaking up into four feudal units: Minkolo, M'Foa, N'Ko, and M'Bouma. These vassal states nominally acknowledged the rule of the Bateke king at M'Be, the royal headquarters; but the Bateke peoples living on the Koukouya Plateau did not. Central authority was on the wane.

In the more remote north, several peoples occupied discrete areas. The

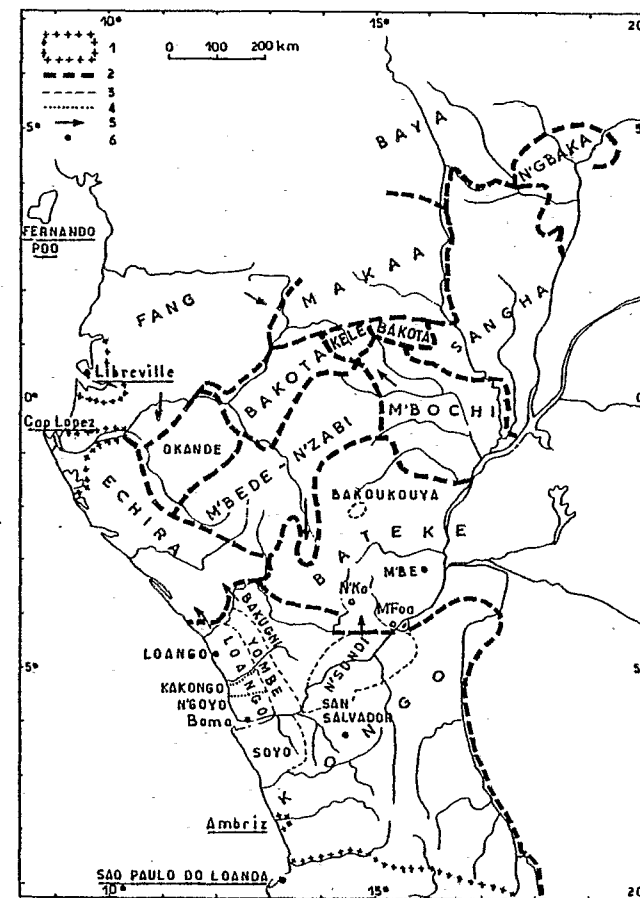


Fig. 8.4. Pre-Colonial Congo in 1875.

- 1: European colonies.
- 2: borders of the kingdoms or of the ethnic groups.
- 3: borders of the vassal kingdoms and of the provinces.
- 4: borders of the political units within the core of the vassal kingdoms.
- 5: directions of migrations.
- 6: capitals of the kingdoms and chief-towns of the colonies.

Likouala lived in the basin of the Ubangi River and the M'Bochi (or Boubangi) in the basin of the Likouala-Mossaka Rivers. In the west, the Bongoili lived along the Middle Sangha River, and the M'Beti were in the upper Ogooue. The Maka peoples came from what is now Cameroon at the end of the last century, and were established in the valley of the Upper Sangha River when the European invasion took place. France and its representatives signed numerous treaties with these disparate peoples to assure its domination over their domains.

The Colonial Period (1880 to 1960)

The present territory of Congo formed the cornerstone of former French Equatorial Africa. Several early attempts to stimulate economic development were unsuccessful, however. It was not until 1940 that the Congolese economy began to progress substantially. By 1960 the pace of development in Congo clearly exceeded that of the other units of French Equatorial Africa. Thus it is possible to identify four major periods during French rule:

1. 1880–1896 Acquisition and pacification
2. 1897–1912 Era of concessionaire companies
3. 1913–1939 Era of trade economy
4. 1940–1960 Modernization of the infrastructure and of the economy generally

Acquisition and Pacification. Colonization of the interior of Congo began in 1880, when Father Savorgnan de Brazza travelled up the Ogooue River. He founded Franceville in the Upper Basin and then reached the Zaire River and the Kingdom of Bateke. De Brazza signed a treaty with the Makoko (king) placing his kingdom under French rule as a protectorate. This made it possible for De Brazza to found a post on the banks of Stanley Pool. Later, De Brazza made a second voyage as head of the "West Africa Mission" and extended French influence from the Basin of the Niari (in competition with the "International Association of the Congo" of Leopold II of Belgium) to the Basin of the Zaire River. In 1883 the French Navy annexed the Atlantic coast. The following year another treaty placed the domain of the Bubangi within the French orbit. Eventually all of the small political units on the right bank of the (then) Congo River became French-controlled. Between 1884 and 1891, the Likouala–Mossaka, Ubangi, Lobaye, and Sangha realms were thus acquired.

The organization and administration of so vast an area posed financial, technical, and human problems. Administrative problems arose due to a rivalry between French naval officers who controlled Gabon and Congo's Atlantic spheres and the civil employees entrusted with the administration of the interior. Financial difficulties arose because De Brazza had requested only one million francs in gold per year to support the development of the Ogooue and Congo basins; this was simply not enough for the project. Technical problems emerged due to insufficient available credit. And human and social problems were encountered because there were not enough administrators, doctors, technicians, missionaries, and merchants to overcome all the obstacles France had created in annexing this vast and disparate country.

The first civil organization of the new colony of "Gabon-Congo" was established in 1886. The "French Congo" was formed in 1891, with De Brazza as the commissioner general residing in Brazzaville and with a

lieutenant governor in Libreville. Numerous administrative posts were established along the waterways and principal land routes.

As early as 1880 De Brazza had proposed the construction of a railway connecting the Congo Basin to the coast, but he was never able to secure the necessary funds. Confronted with this failure, the French colonizers developed a system of human transport and conveyance, notwithstanding the moral, political, and sanitary negatives involved. Thus, exports were limited to very few high-value items: principally ivory (1.4 million francs in 1896), rubber, and ebony. New estimates of natural resources and of population were found, in the 1890s, to be far below those that had been projected a decade earlier in order to attract public and private investment capital. An alternative to stir economic growth had to be found.

The Era of Concessionaire Companies. The concept of the establishment of concessionaire companies to promote the development of colonies is attributed to the economist Leroy-Beaulieu; the idea was first publicly and politically defended by the French Under-Secretary of State for the Navy and Colonies, Eugene Etienne, in 1891. The advantages of this system were that it released government from the expenses of administration and, at the same time, permitted government to assess and earn taxes paid by the companies; further, the government was in the position to award monopolies of trade and commerce to French capitalists.

De Brazza had proposed just such a concession to be awarded to the principal French enterprise in Gabon, as early as 1880. It was finally awarded in 1893, withdrawn again in 1896, and restored in 1897. The "Upper Ogooue Company" received an allotment of 110,000 km² for a period of 30 years for a fixed rental plus a flat 15 percent of the company's profits. The company was given administrative as well as judicial power (Fig. 8.5).

From 1898 to 1900, no less than 41 companies received concessions totalling more than 700,000 km² and thus controlling 70 percent of Congo. They invested the minimum required capital (estimated to have been 60 million gold francs in all) to exploit the most profitable resources: ivory and natural rubber. Although they were required to replant 150 feet of rubber trees for every ton of rubber exported, little attention was paid to this stipulation, so that the resource became seriously depleted. The peak production year for ivory was 1904 (210 tons) and for rubber it was 1906 (1950 tons). Enormous profits were earned and distributed annually to stockholders (up to 38 percent of gross profit for the 18 most active companies in 1910). Copper mining began in 1909 at Mindouli, which was linked to Brazzaville by narrow-gauge railroad in the same year. There, the ore was transferred to the Belgian railroad for Leopoldville (Kinshasa) to Matadi for shipment overseas.

Failure came early to some concession companies, however. Transport problems, labor difficulties, disease, and declines in demand contributed to a reduction in the number of companies (as early as 1903 there were

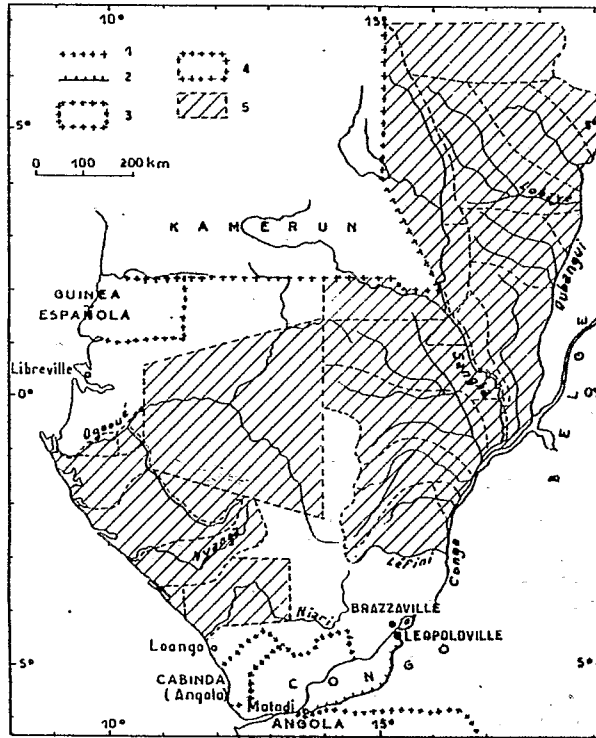


Fig. 8.5. The concessionaire companies in 1900.
1: borders. 2: railways. 3: foreign territories. 4: French territories.
5: concessions.

32 remaining). The first organized revolts against the harsh practices of the companies also had their effect in the Sangha area (1904), the Lobaye (1904–1907), Upper N’Gounie (1908–1909) and the Mayombe (1909–1911). Further, a trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) epidemic decimated the local population in the years from 1898 to 1912. The administration responded by creating a “per capita tax” to produce revenues, and this was followed in 1903 by the imposition of a “native tax” (3 francs per person per year). This tax could be paid in cash or in the form of goods; it served to stimulate further opposition to French rule.

In 1908, the French Congo became the focus of French Equatorial Africa, a federation of the colonies of Gabon, Middle Congo, and Ubangi as well as the military territory of Chad. Brazzaville served as the administrative headquarters. Each colony was divided into districts and then into subdivisions. In 1909 the French Parliament strengthened the position of the concessionaire companies, voting a credit of 21 million francs in

support of their activities. But France now faced other problems in the region. Following increased German activity and pressure, the French signed the Franco-German Agreement of 1911, thereby surrendering 270,000 km² of Gabon and the Middle Congo to Germany. This resulted in a new administrative structure for French Equatorial Africa (or rather, what remained of it), reducing the Middle Congo to two enclaves connected by the Congo and Ubangi Rivers but otherwise unserved by surface communications (Fig. 8.6).

The Era of Trade Economy. Following the failure of the policy favoring concessionaire companies, the French from 1913 onward decided to take the necessary steps to stimulate the economic development of French Equatorial Africa. In 1914, the Parliament authorized French Equatorial Africa’s administration to issue a loan for 171 million francs for the construction of railroads. Steps were also taken to alleviate the plight of workers; in

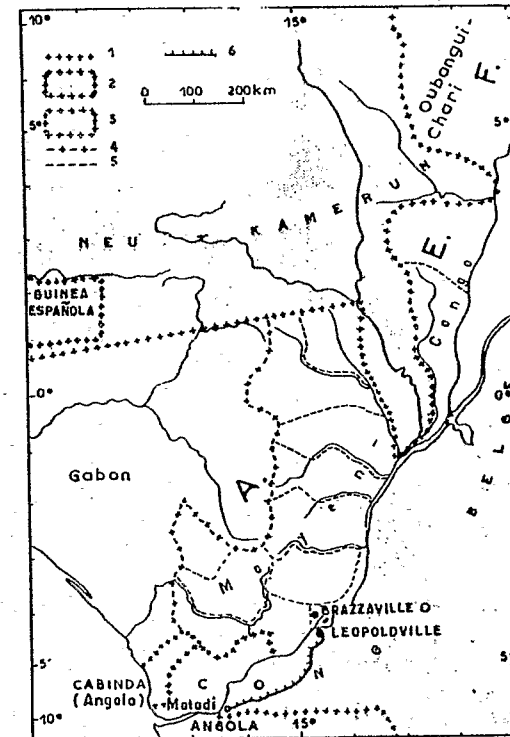


Fig. 8.6. The Middle Congo in 1911.
1: borders. 2: foreign territories. 3: French territories. 4: boundaries of the colonies. 5: boundaries of the districts.

1915 human transport and conveyance were regulated by law and limited to 15 days per year and per man. Further, the French recovered (in 1919) the territories it had surrendered to Germany in 1911. The Middle Congo was the object of several administrative reforms after 1920 (access to the ocean was secured by annexing two districts of Gabon). In 1921 the "railroad district" or Mindouli was established at Pointe Noire. During the later 1920s and early 1930s several internal divisional changes were made

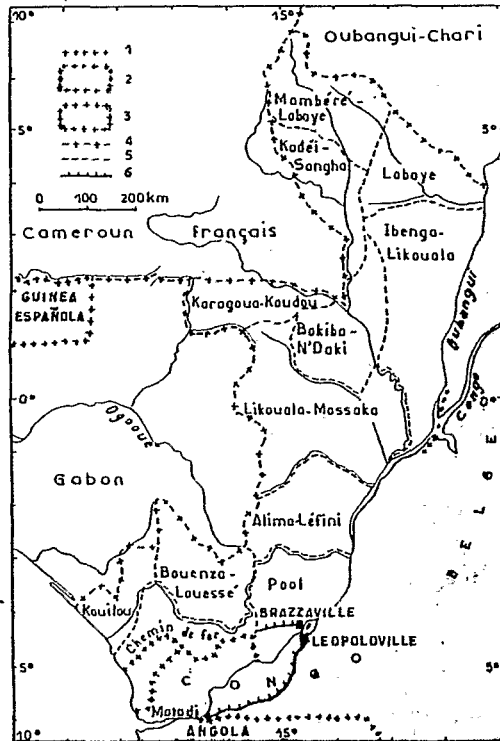


Fig. 8.7. The Middle Congo in 1921.

1: borders. 2: foreign territories. 3: French territories. 4: boundaries of the colonies. 5: boundaries of the districts. 6: railroad.

to streamline Middle Congo's administration, and Pointe Noire was developed between 1934 and 1939 into the best equipped harbor between Dakar and Cape Town (Figs. 8.7 and 8.8). Meanwhile, Pointe Noire had been connected by rail (510 km) to the interior (a project that cost 15,000 of the 150,000 Congolese workers their lives); a road network was under construction to link Brazzaville to the north and to the Niari region. Progress was also made in the establishment of permanent telecommunications links by undersea telegraph cable from Pointe Noire to France and

internally by radio and telephone. An air transport network connected Pointe Noire, Brazzaville, and Impfondo.

Of course the two railroad terminals constituted poles of development and human attraction. Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, end points of Congo's first railroad, grew as the territory's leading cities. In 1917, Brazzaville had a population of 10,200 (600 Europeans), and Pointe Noire had 1200 residents. By 1937, Brazzaville had grown to 18,600 (1100 Europeans) and Pointe Noire had 9000 inhabitants.

The French government and Christian missions in the country contributed to the development process by constructing schools, clinics, and hospitals. The administration also established "native provident companies" from 1937 to aid in the development of rural areas. These companies required all family heads in each subdivision to form a cooperative managed by the chief of the subdivision. Citrus fruit trees and seeds (peanuts) were distributed free to the peasants. But resistance to these compulsory cooperatives was strong among the peasants and some show of force was often necessary to force adoption.

Private enterprise played a modest role during this period. The surviving concessionaire companies by 1919 were involved in legitimate commerce, palm-oil plantations, and river navigation, as well as some residual forest exploitation. In addition, they exploited the small copper, lead, and zinc deposits of the Niari Basin. The copper mines of Mindouli and Reneville yielded a maximum of 3000 tons of concentrates in 1929. The exploitation of the lead and zinc ores of M'Fouati began in 1937 and provided 6,900 tons of lead and 3,300 tons of zinc in 1939. Gold, discovered at Mayombe in 1935, was extracted on a small scale (123 kg in 1939). The only industrial accomplishments of this period were the oil refineries of the Congolese Basin and of Kayes in the Valley of the Niari and the establishment of the railroad repair yards in Pointe Noire.

The economic balance of this period was modest compared to other French colonies. In 1934, the year in which the railroad was completed, the Middle Congo still had a low level of international trade: 16.5 million francs in exports (75 percent to France) as against 75 million francs in imports (45 percent from France). French Equatorial Africa (FEA) had not attracted the considerable volumes of French capital investment seen in Indochina and North Africa. With the other dependencies of FEA, the Middle Congo therefore remained the Cinderella of the French colonial empire.

Modernization of Infrastructure and Economy. The last 20 years prior to independence in 1960 saw the Middle Congo develop economically at an unprecedented rate. From 1940 to 1945 the country participated in the war effort, having rallied to the cause of General de Gaulle's "Free French." In 1947, a Ten-Year Plan and increasing private investment provided Congo with considerable capital. The peaceful evolution of the colony toward independence began in 1946 when it became an Overseas

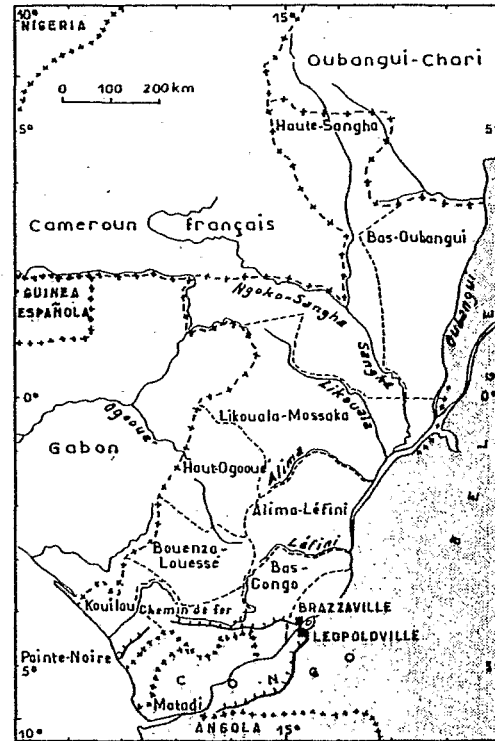


Fig. 8.8. The Middle Congo in 1933.

Territory. In 1956 it was declared an Autonomous Territory, in 1958 an Autonomous Republic and, finally, a Republic in 1960. The period from 1940 to 1960 can be seen in three stages: the World War, Post-War, and Autonomy stages.

During World War II significant quantities of war materials were carried on the Congolese railroads and rivers from Chad and the (then) Anglo-Egyptian Sudan to the Atlantic coast. The colonial administration cooperated fully in this transport effort and in the production of strategic materials. African farmers once again began to grow latex in the forest (3500 tons in 1944). The bituminous schists of the Mayombe were exploited for coal. More than 3 tons of gold were extracted from the Mayombe from 1940 to 1944.

Industrialization became necessary as imports from France were unavailable during the war. Factories were constructed in Brazzaville (foundry, tannery, soap making, shoes, cigarettes, matches), in Dolisie (tannery) and in Pointe Noire (sawmills). By 1945 as much as 10 percent of the total population was employed in manufacturing. The labor force in Brazzaville increased from 18,700 in 1937 to 46,500 in 1945. Pointe Noire's labor force was 19,150 persons in 1945 as against only 9000 in 1937.

The post-war period witnessed an effort by France to compensate French Equatorial Africa for its war effort. Political reforms were implemented, including the suppression of the "native" status and the elimination of forced labor; a territorial assembly was created in each colony, and all were awarded the status of Overseas Territory. At the Federation level, a Grand Council was created and a new currency was introduced — the CFA franc. In addition, France financed a Ten-Year Development Plan (1947–1956) in the amount of 51,525 million CFA francs. Of this fund, 77 percent was destined for economic development and 23 percent for social and scientific fields. With only 16.3 percent of the population of French Equatorial Africa in 1946, the Middle Congo received 17.9 percent of these funds.

Transport and energy carried a high priority. The Federal Highway (Pointe Noire–Brazzaville–Bangui–Fort Lamy) and the port of Pointe Noire were improved. A diesel engine system was installed on the Congo–Ocean Railroad. Diesel-engine tugs replaced the old firewood-powered steam tugs on the Congo River. Other surface communication routes received needed attention: airports were improved, and a Class A airport was built at Brazzaville. Energy production was increased through the Djoue Dam near Brazzaville and thermal plants were constructed at Brazzaville, Pointe Noire, and Dolisie.

Once again the administration proceeded to redivide the territory. Parts of the Upper Sangha area were allocated from Congo to (then) Ubangi-Chari and sections of the Upper Ogooué were attached to Gabon. New regional and divisional boundaries were established as well (Figs. 8.9 and 8.10).

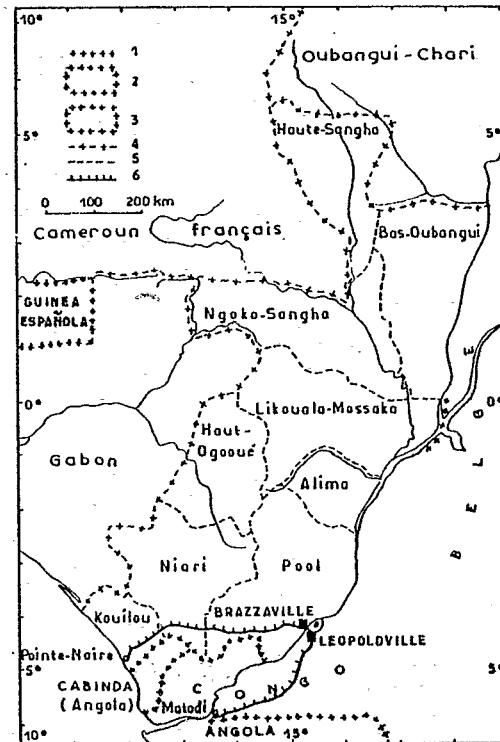


Fig. 8.9. The Middle Congo in 1945.

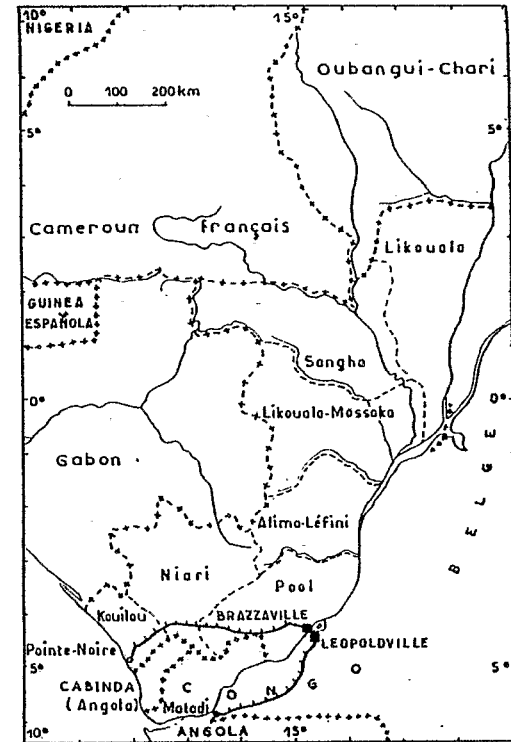


Fig. 8.10. The Middle Congo in 1950.

1: border. 2: foreign territories. 3: French territories. 4: boundaries of the French overseas territories.

Agricultural development was promoted by agronomic research stations in the Valley of the Niari and nurseries were created in each region to experiment with different ecological circumstances and to assure the distribution of plants and seeds to peasants. The Departments of Agriculture, Waters, and Forests trained technicians to assist the farmers with field crops, cattle raising, and fish-farming. From 1952 to 1956 peasant-type cooperatives were established in each of the large natural regions of Congo. These developments were to facilitate an economic and social evolution by concentrating capital investment and technology. Approximately 20,000 farmers participated. Reimbursements to the government were made by reserving a portion of the harvest and from natural increases in herds and droves. The agricultural policy also permitted the establishment of small individual farms by people selected by the government from among the elite. In addition, export crops were introduced and encouraged. Tobacco was produced on the Bateke Plateaus, peanuts in the Niari Valley, bananas in the Mayombe, and coffee, cocoa, and rubber in the Niari forest.

Education made spectacular progress during this period. Many schools were established in the principal villages, and two high schools and one professional school opened in Brazzaville. Private institutions accounted for approximately 60 percent of the students. From 1945 to 1956 the

rate of school attendance increased from 11 to 51 percent of the school-age population.

With these improvements in the infrastructure, private investors no longer hesitated to invest in Congo. The industrial sector received the largest investments: a sugar mill and sugar refinery in Jacob, sawmills and wood finishing plants in Pointe Noire, and a textile plant and cigarette factory in Brazzaville. A hydroelectric power plant on the Kouilou in the Mayombe which was to produce 6.5 billion kwh per year and supply the industrial complex at Pointe Noire (metallurgical and chemical industries) came under study.

Forestry also expanded, from 13,000 hectares in 1947 to 231,500 in 1951, and to 475,900 in 1955. Considerable increases in the production of Gabon wood occurred. Mining, however, continued to be of only modest importance but investments were obtained to explore for hydrocarbons in the coastal zone of Congo (the southern extension of the oil-rich basin discovered in Gabon to the north).

Agricultural investments occurred primarily in a European colony in the Valley of the Niari where the mechanized production of peanuts and rice as well as cattle raising were important. Large capitalist companies invested in sugar cane plantations of the industrial and Agricultural Company of the Niari (SIAN) — 3500 hectares — in the Region of the Sangha. Extensive cattle raising of the trypano-tolerant bovines (N'Dama strain) was developed in the Valley of the Niari and on the plateaus. The herd increased from 3000 to 7000 head between 1953 and 1955.

Agricultural production of palm-oil, cabbage-palm, peanuts, coffee, cocoa, and rubber constituted Congo's principal exports. Lumber and mining products were secondary exports. In 1955, imports represented 7.4 billion CFA francs, while exports were only 1.9 billion. This negative trade balance was due to the necessity of importing capital goods, and underscored the continuing state of underdevelopment in the country.

Between 1956 and 1960 Congo moved from autonomy to independence during a period of rapid political evolution. In 1956, the territory of Middle Congo was administered by a voting territorial assembly and a government council presided over by the governor. In 1958, the Republic of Congo was established, autonomous within the French Community. Finally, on August 15, 1960, independence was achieved.

The field of education recorded spectacular gains during this period. The rate of school attendance increased from 51 to 68 percent for children between the ages of 6 and 14. Private schools remained of prime importance for the elementary grades with 56 percent of all the students taught at those levels, but public schools educated the majority of high school students and technical school students (68 and 51 percent respectively). Some progress also was made in the health field. In addition to Brazzaville's General Hospital, clinics were built in other areas of the country. However, in 1960 there still was only one doctor for every 13,300 inhabitants (an

improvement over 15,300 in 1956), and one hospital bed for each 208 inhabitants (as against 248 in 1956).

The pre-independence period also saw the massive arrival of private investment capital. The manganese mines of Moanda in Gabon were connected to the Congo-Ocean railroad by means of a cableway that required 25 billion CFA francs to be invested over a 5 year period. Since 12 billion of this amount was used to improve the railroad system itself, it had the effect of opening up a larger area of the Niari Valley as well. And in 1960, exploitation of newly found oil deposits off Pointe-Indienne marked the beginning of Congo's drive toward energy self-sufficiency.

On the eve of independence, therefore, Congo was the best-equipped of the four former territories of French Equatorial Africa; it was also the best educated, most urbanized, and most industrialized of the four. This position had developed in large part because of Congo's pivotal location in the Federation. But progress had a price. Development in Congo was not well distributed; there was an enormous regional disparity between the Pointe Noire-Brazzaville corridor in the south and the under-equipped, underpopulated, disadvantaged northern interior.

INDEPENDENCE AND THE PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT

From 1960 until 1980, Congo has been ruled by two successive political regimes which espoused two radically different economic policies. Until 1963, the country was administered by a regime that was pro-West, exhibited no clear economic direction, and, in effect, constituted a neocolonial intermediary. After 1963 another regime embarked upon a series of experiments in socialism that have failed, fundamentally due to bad management. Since December, 1975 a successor government has declared plans for the "radicalization of the revolution" and a return to financial orthodoxy and the principles of efficient management in order to achieve a more productive series of Development Plans.

The Neocolonial Period (1960-1963)

As noted, Congo became independent in August, 1960 with a serious regional imbalance in almost every respect. Seating in the new parliament was on an ethnic basis and control was in the hands of southern politicians. The group in power represented the "effective Congo", that is to say, the Brazzaville-Pointe Noire region.

Command posts in the new administration remained in the hands of expatriate Europeans. The new administration busied itself with the latest reorganization of the nation's internal structure. From the 7 regions and 31 districts of 1950 they formed 12 "prefectures" and 37 "sub-prefectures" (Fig. 8.11). The federal services of former French Equatorial Africa were

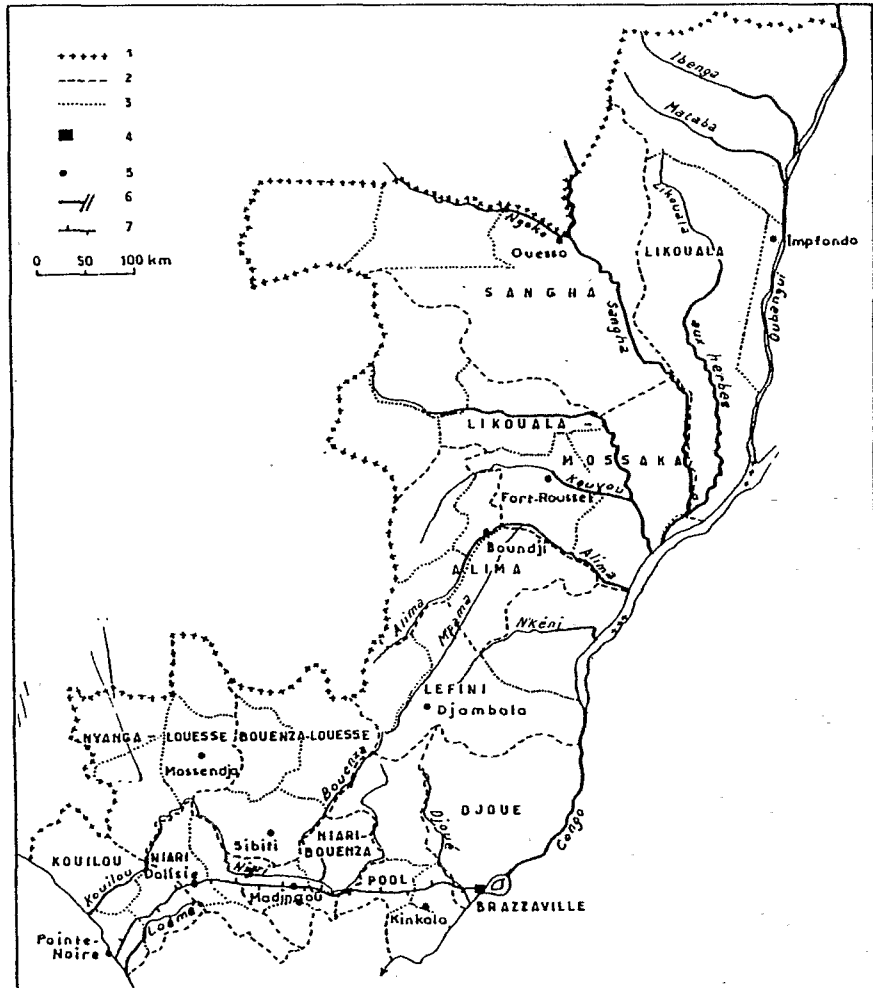


Fig. 8.11. The Congo in 1960.

1: borders. 2: boundaries of the prefectures. 3: boundaries of the sub-prefectures. 4: capital. 5: chief town of the prefecture. 6: navigable water routes. 7: railroad.

established in the form of interstate agencies within the "conference of chiefs of state of Equatorial Africa," the secretariat of which became established permanently in Brazzaville. Eight such agencies were established.

1. The Trans-Equatorial Agency of Communications, consisting of the port of Pointe Noire, and Congo-Ocean Railroad, the

- Port of Brazzaville, the services on the navigable waterways, and the port of Bangui (AETC)
2. The Equatorial Office of Posts and Telecommunications (OEPT)
3. The Central Office Machines Agency
4. The Department of Weights and Measures
5. The Agency for the Security of Air Navigation in Africa (ASECNA) regional office
6. The Central Bank of Equatorial African States and of Cameroon
7. The Equatorial Customs Union (Secretariat)
8. The Foundation of Higher Education in Central Africa (FESAC)

The Congolese state facilitated the flow of foreign capital by an "investment code." The first Three-Year Development Plan (1961–1963) projected 10.5 billion CFA francs in public investments. The government purchased the palm-oil plantation at Ouessou which belonged to a private concern that was on the brink of bankruptcy. It intervened in the rural economy by transforming the African provident companies into "rural cooperation centers" and their common funds into the National Congolese Company for Rural Development. Equipped with budgets, materials, and personnel different from those of the sub-prefectures, these agencies proved to be inefficient and costly.

In 1962, the construction of the railroad and cableway for COMILOG was completed. By 1963, traffic through the port of Pointe Noire increased from 767,000 tons (1969) to 1,440,000 tons, some 570,000 tons of it manganese ore. Although agricultural production stagnated (with the exception of sugar cane), the export of lumber increased by 18 percent in just 4 years. The mining industry expanded by virtue of its growing production of petroleum, but there was a decrease in the extraction of nonferrous ores. Industry also grew impressively: new chemical plants opened in Brazzaville (plastics, paints, perfumes), a flourmill in Jacob, and another metallurgical plant in Pointe Noire. Numerous factories were under construction. Oil production exceeded 100,000 tons per year.

There always was a persistent deficit in foreign trade in spite of a decrease in imports (from 17.3 billion CFA francs in 1960 to 16.3 billion CFA francs in 1963) and a spectacular increase in exports (from 4.4 billion CFA francs in 1960 to 10.3 billion CFA francs in 1963). This increase in export revenues was substantially due to a large re-exporting of diamonds, which reached the country from (then) Congo-Leopoldville via illegal channels and there entered the legitimate trade — which was then heavily taxed by the Brazzaville government. Thus the structure of exports changed during the 1960–1963 period. Agricultural products decreased from 17.2 to 7.4 percent of the total value, lumber from 63.7 to 35.5 percent, and ores and metals increased from 6.7 to 51 percent — mainly due to 4.7 billion CFA in diamond exports (1963). In terms of imports, France continued to be the main supplier, but a decline was evident (66 percent in 1960, 61 percent in 1963).

In spite of a considerable trade deficit, the balance of payments was held steady through foreign investments: a total of 34.7 billion CFA francs from 1960 to 1963, 26.5 billion of which derived from private investments and 8.2 billion from the public sector (more than half of it as gifts and loans from France). Very few countries have benefited from such infusions of capital within so short a period of time.

Socialist Experiments (1963 to 1980)

The incorporation of socialist concepts into Congo's political and economic life began late in 1963. However, even in the mid-1970s the economy still remained integrated (although the government in 1979 announced its determination to eliminate the last vestiges of capitalist enterprise). Two distinct periods can be identified. The first (1963 to 1968) may be characterized as a struggle against small-scale Congolese enterprise. The second (1968 to 1979) involved policies to encourage foreign capital investment. A third phase of repudiation (1979 onward) may have just begun.

The First Socialist Experiment (1963–1968). The revolution of 1963 brought into power a government committed to "scientific socialism," Congolization, and socialization. Congolization of administrative posts was achieved as early as 1963. French technical assistants were retained in positions for which trained Congolese personnel were not yet available, but where possible, replacements were made. The nationalization of private schools began in 1965. This, however, led to the replacement of many highly competent teachers with less well-trained staff, and quality suffered. On the other hand, schools now became accessible to far more students and by 1968 school attendance was 85 percent of school-age children.

Improvements in health care were achieved by the establishment of additional clinics and the appointment of a large number of physicians. In 1963 there were 46 doctors in the country (over three-quarters of them foreigners); in 1968 there were 103, over 85 percent expatriate. The number of hospital beds increased from 3,575 to 4,484 over the same period, a 25 percent increase.

These early accomplishments were paralleled by yet another modification of the country's regional administrative structure. The prefectures and sub-prefectures were eliminated, and now the country was divided (1967) into 9 regions and 44 districts (Fig. 8.12). In part this design was developed to facilitate the implementation of the Temporary Five-Year Plan. The aim of this Plan (1964–1968) was to concentrate development efforts exclusively in a limited number of "interior development areas" grouped around urban centers. The Office for the Creation, Control, and Guidance of Development Enterprises of the State (BCCO) was established in 1965. Although espousing an anti-capitalist position, the government in fact encouraged private foreign enterprise, since it had neither the financial resources nor the trained personnel to establish state control over the modern sector of the economy. Some minor nationalization efforts did

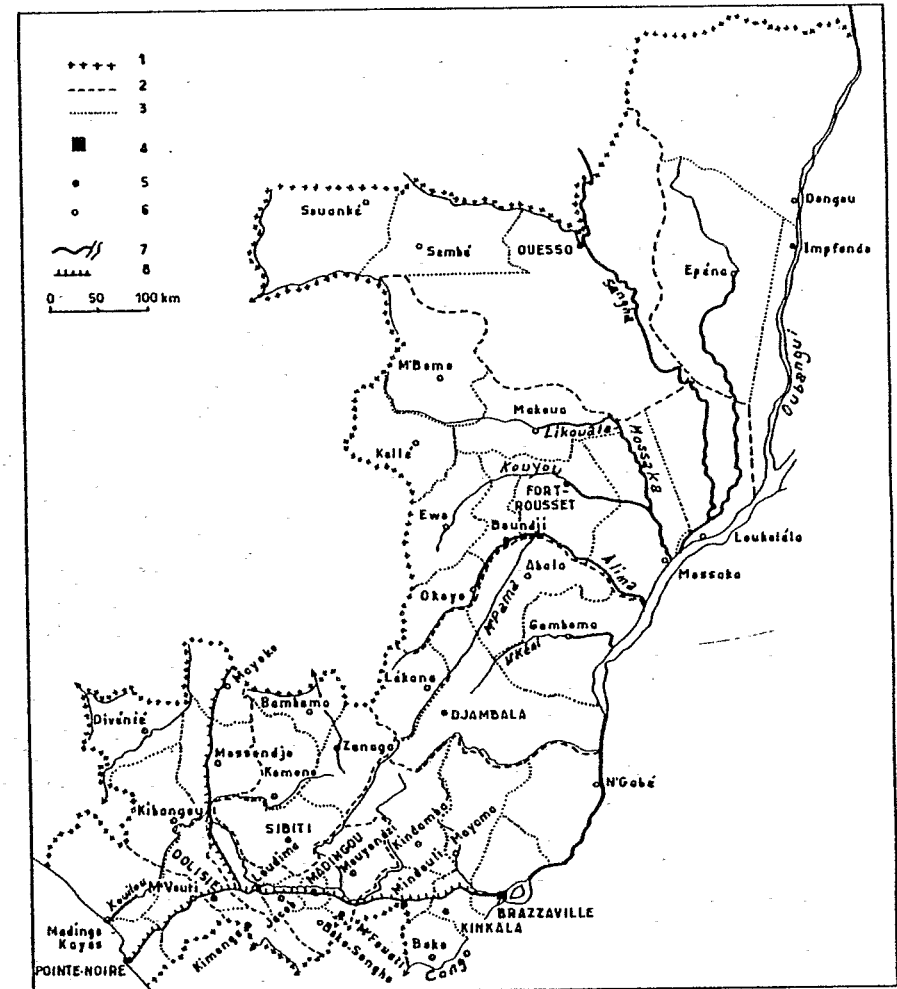


Fig. 8.12. The Congo in 1968.

1: borders. 2: boundaries of the regions. 3: boundaries of the districts. 4: capital. 5: chief town of the region. 6: chief town of the district. 7: navigable waterways. 8: railroads.

occur. Palm tree plantations and businesses (a last vestige of the concessionaire companies) were nationalized. A brick factory in the suburbs of Brazzaville was nationalized in 1966, and the water and electricity distribution companies were taken over in 1967.

However, the government adopted a hostile attitude toward small capitalist enterprises owned by Congolese citizens. Wholesalers, road transport agents, and heads of small companies (masonry, woodworking, etc.) were subjected to considerable official interference, and state agencies were estab-

lished in direct competition with such enterprises under the aegis of the National Office for Marketing of Agricultural Products (ONCPA), the National Office of Commerce (OFNACOM), and the Congolese Office of Housing (OCH).

OFNACOM established a network of retail outlets selling Chinese products in direct competition with local businesses (whereas European commerce on a large scale flourished without such rivalry). But manned by plethoric personnel and poorly managed, OFNACOM soon became a burden on the state.

ONCPA received a monopoly over the collection and marketing of agricultural export products. Small merchants, removed from the collection system, became unable to offset the failures of ONCPA. As a result, tonnages marketed and revenues received all declined substantially, producing in effect a double deficit. Slowly and quietly, ONCPA authorities allowed former private collectors to reinstitute their operations.

OCH, the Congolese Office of Housing, functioned as the supervisory agency over a number of pilot housing projects in Brazzaville and other urban centers. Neither this agency nor the furniture factory that it established in 1968 proved to be serious competition for private concerns; it was simply too inefficient.

An ambitious program of industrial projects made possible by foreign aid was begun by the BCCO. The Chinese provided funds for a textile complex and the Russians for a furniture factory in Brazzaville; the North Koreans funded a match factory in Betou and the West Germans supported a cement factory in Loutete. The BCCO became associated with the private capital interests of SIAN to establish a new agro-industrial unit for sugar cane (the Sosuniari) near Jacob. Sugar production increased from 22,000 tons in 1963 to 51,000 tons in 1968.

In addition to the unprecedented 17.2 billion CFA francs invested by the Congolese government from 1964 to 1968, another 46.2 billion were received as foreign investments. Private investment amounted to 35.1 billion CFA francs, of which 2.1 billion was for the exploitation of potassium deposits at Holle. The remaining 11.1 billion came from public sources, and 28.8 percent of it was French. The primary sector (mining, forestry, and fishing) received 64.3 percent of the private capital. The secondary sector (food industries, factories) received 22.2 percent, and the tertiary sector (transport services, trade) were awarded 13.5 percent.

The government increased public employment considerably in order to alleviate the problem of urban unemployment, raising the national budget from 8.5 billion CFA Francs in 1963 to 12 billion in 1968. This action also resulted in the intensification of rural-to-urban migration flows in the country. Hence the percentage of the population residing in urban areas increased from 27 percent in 1962 to 33 percent in 1968.

The economy underwent a period of growth from 1963 to 1968, although this growth was limited in certain sectors. Agricultural production stag-

nated with the exception of sugar cane (by virtue of the development of SIAN and the creation of another organization, SOSUNIARI). Land devoted to sugar cane increased from 3,500 hectares in 1963 to 22,000 in 1968, and production increased from 200,000 to more than 900,000 tons in the same period. While fishing industries remained about the same and lumbering grew slightly, mining activity declined somewhat due to the exhaustion of known ores; however, the new discoveries of petroleum and potassium seemed to presage a brighter future.

Industry showed the greatest progress among all the economic sectors. Nevertheless, government enterprises showed a 1 billion CFA franc deficit by 1968, while non-state-managed "mixed" companies did much better. In January, 1966, Cameroon joined the Economic and Customs Union of Central Africa (UDEAC). While Congolese industries were able to gain a new and important market, they also faced new and powerful competitors.

In general, this first experiment in the socialization of the economy may be described as a failure. Only because of significant and substantial foreign investment and support did a favorable balance sheet result. Public finances in Congo suffered a 4.5 billion CFA francs deficit; public enterprises lost another 1.0 billion.

The Second Socialist Experiment (1968-1977). The period starting in August 1968 was characterized by the achievement of industrial unity, a general lack of planning (until the 1975-1977 Three-Year Plan), further nationalizations, the growth of establishments of mixed private and public ownership, and by the development of small Congolese-owned companies.

Toward the end of 1968 and during 1969, state-owned factories opened with foreign technical and financial assistance. In Brazzaville a cotton mill complex opened with the help of a loan from China, and a disk factory was installed by the Japanese. A match factory began production in Betou with North Korean aid.

A Five-Year Plan (1970-1974) was developed but never completed. According to a report of the United Nations Program for Development, dated July 1972, "the inertia of the administrative structure and above all the absence of a clear political line and of a political definition of general and partial objectives have prevented the synthesis and final completion of the Plan."

The government affirmed its desire to control the entire infrastructure. Inter-governmental agencies of the Conference of Chiefs of State of Equatorial Africa were Congolized. Thus, in 1970, the Trans-Equatorial Communications Agency became the Trans-Congolese Communications Agency (ATC). In 1972, the French radiophonic and telecommunications installations (Radio Brazzaville and the French Radio Cable Company) were nationalized. In 1975 the foreign insurance companies were nationalized and replaced by a single company (Insurance and Re-Insurance of Congo).

Similarly, a national company for domestic navigation (Congo Line)

was established. Modernization of transport facilities, including the partial asphaltting of the Brazzaville-Ouesso Highway and improvement of the ports of Brazzaville and Pointe Noire, were accomplished with the help of France, Canada, and several other countries. In areas of education and health, some milestones were reached: school attendance reached 100 percent for the first time in 1972, there were 162 physicians (61 percent expatriates), and nearly 6000 hospital beds in 1973, an increase of 33 percent over 1968.

Some further nationalization of private industrial companies also occurred. The agro-industrial sugar cane complex and the flour mill in Jacob became public companies when SIAN decided to stop production because of a decline in profits caused by social problems and tensions. The Israeli-owned turning and veneering plant (AFRIBOIS) in Pointe Noire was nationalized as a consequence of the severing of diplomatic relations with Israel in 1970. The state thus found itself in control of the most important agro-industrial plant in the country and 23 percent of the production capacity of the wood turning and veneering industry (30,000 out of 130,000 m³). Nevertheless, these nationalizations developed into financial burdens rather than assets for the state. Social tensions also hampered production at the sugar cane complex; the flour mill burned down in 1969; and the lumber plant had to close down for many months due to a worldwide slump in the industry. Nationalization of the oil industry took place in 1974 after the government had prevented the various companies (Mobil, Purfina, Shell, Texaco, and Total) from increasing their sales rates. The companies responded by ceasing production, were nationalized, and were replaced by the national company called Hydro-Congo. Also in 1974, the Office of National Forests was divided into a National Forestry Exploitation Company and a Congolese Forest Office that was responsible for reforestation.

In spite of these difficulties, the government continued to finance public undertakings with the help of foreign capital. In Brazzaville, a naval shipyard was constructed with funds from China and a synthetic textile plant with funds from Romania. In Pointe Noire, a marine fishing complex (Italian finances) and an oil refinery (Belgian money) were built. Still another industrial lumber complex was constructed, with Romanian assistance, in Betou. Exploitation of minerals on the Plateau of Cataracts was supported by the Soviet Union, a cattle ranch was opened in the Niari region with help from US AID. But all these new public enterprises were not managed any better than the others had been previously, and they became expenses to the national budget rather than revenue producers.

The state also decided to participate in companies in which it was unable to assume full financial responsibility or provide the required technical personnel. It purchased 15 percent of the Congo Potassium Company at Holle and 20 percent of the ELF-Congo and AGIP-Research Companies, which were commissioned to exploit the offshore oil reserves. It also ac-

quired 30 percent of the printed-cotton fabric plant (IMPRECO) of Brazzaville which opened in 1975. Oil exploitation, which had begun in 1972, was contributing importantly to the financial resources of the state; world increases in oil prices resulted in royalties as high as 20 billion CFA francs in 1974, when production was 2 million tons.

These financial resources generated by petroleum production, and by the potassium industry (which began in 1969) led to the establishment of a Three-Year Development Plan (1975-1977) based upon a budget of 76 billion CFA francs. The funding was allocated to cover the deficits of public enterprises (5.3 percent), for pending projects (28.5 percent), for studies and surveys (3 percent), and for new projects (63.2 percent). The primary sector received 17.6 percent, the secondary sector 14.4 percent, transportation and telecommunications 26.8 percent, trade 4.6 percent, and the rest of the tertiary sector (including the government itself) 36.6 percent. The investments were distributed annually as follows: 35.9 percent in 1975, 31.3 percent in 1976, and 32.8 percent in 1977. Oil revenues, however, produced lower revenues than had been projected (in 1975 they generated 17.5 billion CFA Francs rather than 24), again because of deteriorating production techniques and poor management and also because of the depreciation of the dollar. As a result, only 45.8 percent of the 1975 budgetary commitments could be met. From the start, therefore, the success of the Three-Year Development plan was compromised.

Although many jobs were created in the administration of public and private enterprises, unemployment remained a problem as urbanization increased. In 1974 Brazzaville's population reached 299,000 (23.2 percent of Congo's 1,289,000 inhabitants in that year). Built-up areas with more than 2000 people accounted for 54.9 percent of the Congolese population (up from 34.4 percent in 1965), which constituted one of the highest urbanization rates in Black Africa. The concentration of cities and towns in the south of the country accentuated the imbalance between this region (31 percent of the territory and 78 percent of the population) and the north, which was already quite different both ethnically and economically (Figs. 8.13, 8.14, and 8.15).

The 1968-1976 period was also characterized by the growing importance of small Congolese enterprises (merchants, trucking companies, various contractors, and chicken farmers) in suburban areas. Entrepreneurs were recruited from the elite of the private sector. Government officials and politicians also became involved in the administration of small businesses, despite the fact that this was contrary to revolutionary ethics and was indeed condemned by the government itself in 1975.

After 1968, in fact, the private sector of the economy had been flourishing while the public sector never even achieved financial balance. In the private sector, small Congolese agriculturalists and large-scale European operations produced the successes; state farms run by foreign (Romanian) personnel achieved gains with cotton and corn, but their costs remained higher

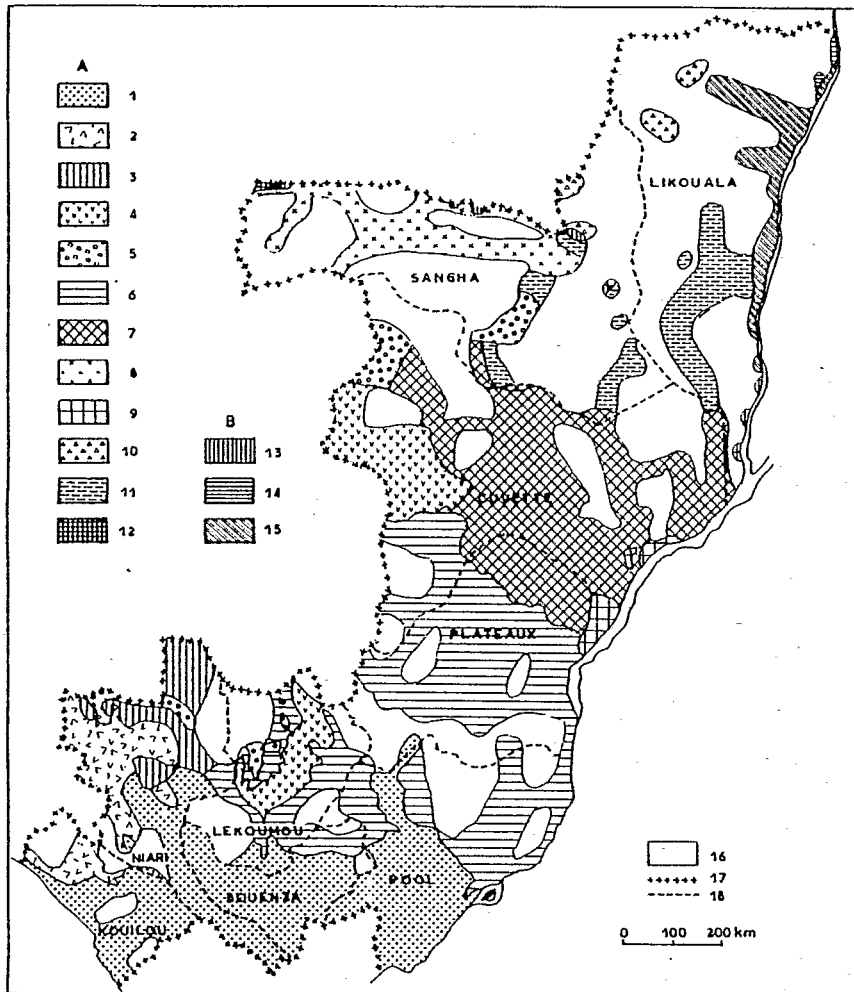


Fig. 8.13. Administrative divisions and linguistic groups in 1980. (According to A. Jacquet)

A: Bantu Groups. 1: Kongo 2: Echira 3: Tsangui 4: M'Bete 5: Kota 6: Teke. 7: M'Bochi. 8: Makaa. 9: Boubangui. 10: Kaka. 11: Bonguili. 12: Fang.
 B: Non-Bantu Groups. 13: Gbaya. 14: Banda. 15: Ngbaka. 16: Uninhabited areas: 17: borders. 18: boundaries of areas.

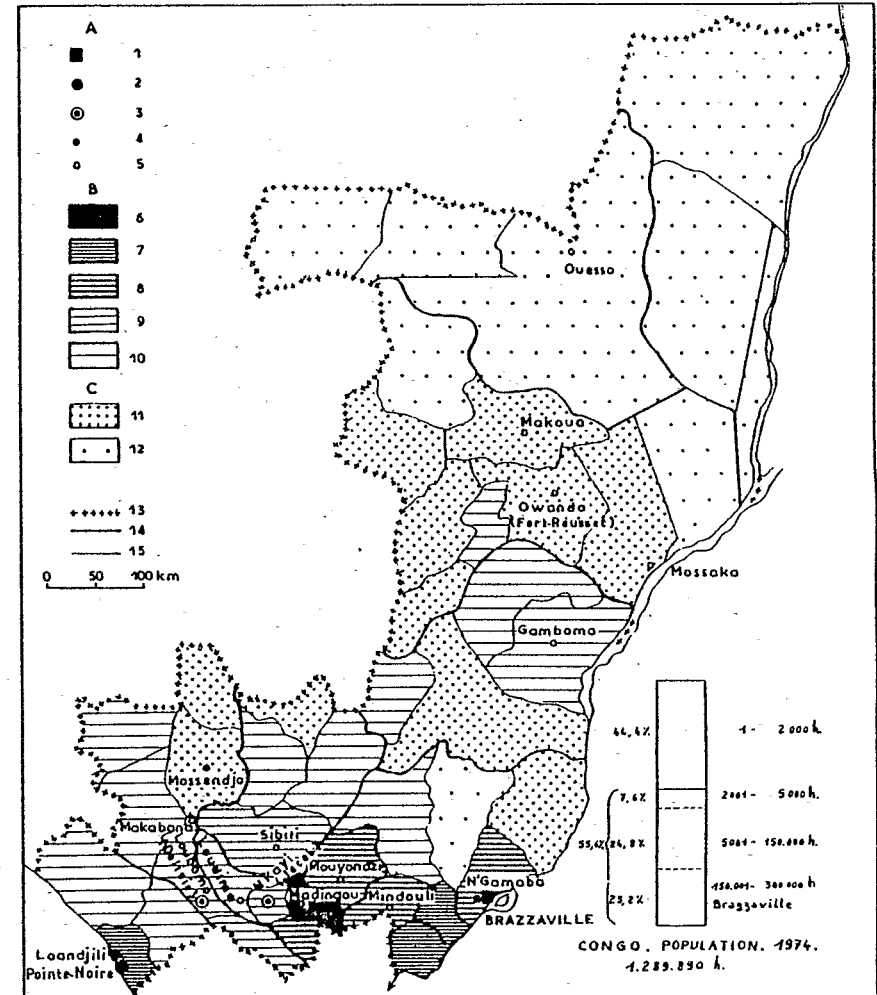


Fig. 8.14. Cities and rural population densities.

A: Cities: 1: from 150,001 to 300,000 inhabitants 2: from 50,001 to 150,000. 3: from 20,001 to 50,000. 4: from 10,001 to 20,000. 5: from 5,001 to 10,000.
 B: Rural population; densities above the national average. 6: from 15.1 to 20 inhabitants/km² 7: from 10.1 to 15. 8: from 5.1 to 9: from 3.1 to 5. 10: from 1.8 to 3.
 C: Rural population; densities lower than the national average. 11: from 0.9 to 1.7 inhabitants/km² 12: from 0.1 to 0.8. 13: borders. 14: boundaries of the areas. 15: boundaries of the districts.

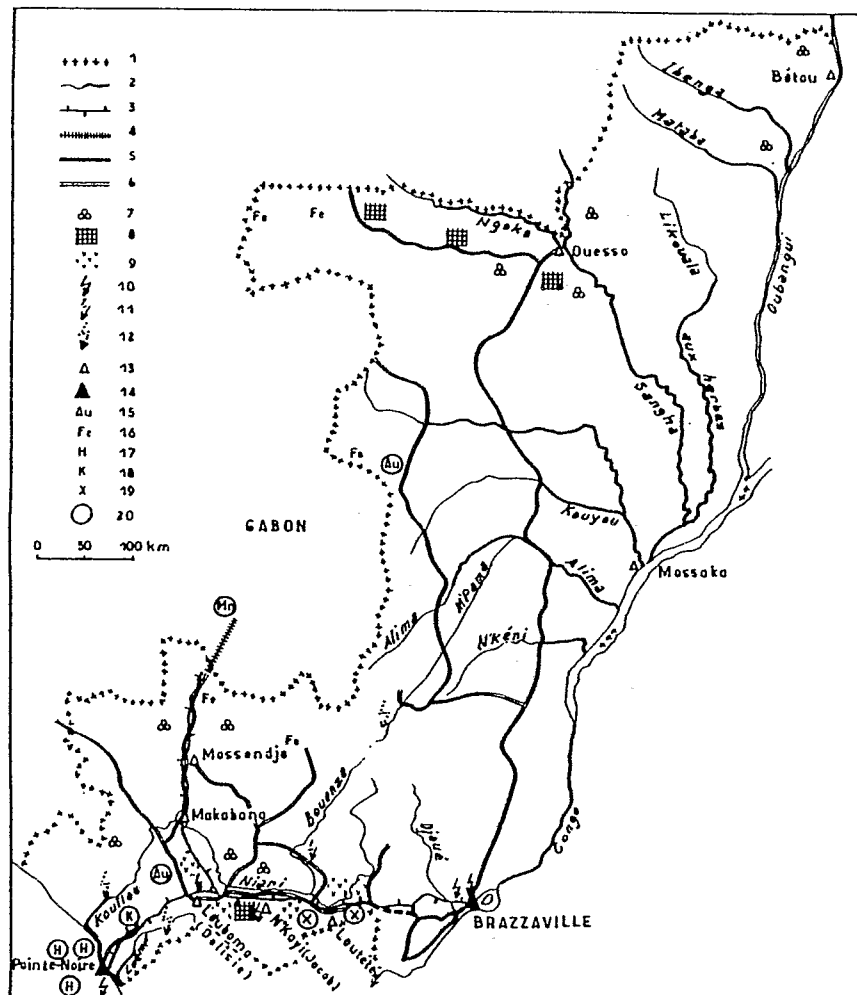


Fig. 8.15. The Economy in 1980.

1: borders. 2: navigable waterways. 3: railroads. 4: cableways. 5: asphalt roadways. 6: dirt roads. 7: forestry exploitation. 8: cultivation for export. 9: cattle raising and ranching. 10: power stations in operation. 11: power stations under construction. 12: power stations in project stage. 13: non-differentiated small industrial center. 14: large differentiated industrial center. 15: gold. 16: iron. 17: hydrocarbons. 18: potassium. 19: poly-metals (copper, lead, zinc). 20: deposits being exploited.

than the prices obtained on world markets. Livestock production also increased, although not enough to meet domestic demand. Foreign money and equipment helped raise the annual fish catch, but forestry, until 1970 a mainstay of the economy, suffered a serious decline from its 1970 level of 840,000 m³. By 1975 production was only 400,000 m³, while the Three-Year Development Plan had projected 900,000 m³.

Mining became the most productive industry in Congo between 1968 and 1975. The exploitation of Holle's potassium deposits; the exploitation of offshore oil-generated revenues that partly offset the losses sustained elsewhere; and metal production (copper, lead, zinc), though comparatively modest, increased during the period (from 6600 to 15,400 tons). Technical problems continued, however, to plague the oil industry throughout the 1970s.

Electric power production, a crucial indicator of development, doubled between 1968 and 1976 (reaching 100 million kwh). Transportation also expanded, but the 1974 world recession had a negative impact. Still, tonnage handled at Pointe Noire more than doubled from 2,500,000 in 1968 to 5,786,000 in 1975. The world lumber crisis produced an opposite effect at the river port of Brazzaville, which in 1974 recorded transit of 537,000 tons but only 325,000 tons in 1975 — barely over the 1968 total of 299,000 tons.

Foreign trade increased by 44 percent from 1968 to 1973 (the most recent available statistics), to reach a total of 47,345 CFA francs. Imports (again for the most recently available year, 1973) totalled 27,731 billion CFA francs and exports 19,614 billion. Thus a deficit of more than 8 billion CFA francs was recorded, despite Congo's Associate Membership in the European Economic Community, which buys nearly three-quarters of Congo's exports. In the mid-1970s socialist countries accounted for the purchase of only 3.9 percent of Congo's exports, while France alone bought 28.3 percent, primarily hydrocarbons. France also supplied well over 50 percent of Congo's imports during the 1970s.

Notwithstanding certain gains made by the Congolese economy after 1968, the balance sheet in the late 1970s was catastrophic. As early as 1974 the public debt exceeded 100 billion CFA francs, the foreign debt amounting to over 8 billion (70 percent of it owed to the EEC and 30 percent to socialist countries). In 1973, real payments of the public foreign debt represented 10.7 percent of exports. When a new government took over in 1975, it announced that from 1965 to 1975 accumulated budgetary deficits had reached 25 billion CFA francs. In January, 1976, the President reported in a speech to the nation that there had been "weakness of political management . . . awkwardness and inefficiency in the state apparatus . . . weakness in the economic sector of the state . . . incompetence and lack of conscientiousness on the part of specialized personnel . . . and an unrestrained drive toward materialism." The President also denounced the nation's habit of turning to foreign "gray matter" whenever there

were problems to be solved. But once again Congo turned to foreign sources in order to secure additional loans: the European Economic Community, the African Bank for Development, and the OPEC countries.

President Ngouabi was unable to see his government's drive toward greater self-sufficiency and freedom from neocolonialism succeed, for he was assassinated in 1977 — an event that was followed by even stronger calls for a new economic order and what was described as the "socio-cultural liberation" of the country. Between 1977 and 1980, however, the country drifted toward economic chaos. Congo remained in the CFA franc zone, the symbol of neocolonialist finances; most of the productive part of the economy remained in foreign hands, and most trade continued to be with France. Meanwhile, inflation rates approached an unprecedented 100 percent annually, the national debt continued to grow, and financial carelessness and mismanagement persisted in the state-run sectors of the economy. In 1978 three major foreign-built factories were forced to close down after overemployment of labor and gross inefficiency left them with major deficits. The Chinese-built textile complex ceased production in 1979 when its losses amounted to 900 million CFA francs. When the Congo's sugar company faced a similar fate the government called on a Canadian concern to render it profitable again.

These events occurred against a background of growing political instability. Attempted coups and destructive purges contributed to Congo's economic malaise, and administrations have had little opportunity to counter economic trends in an atmosphere of stability and planning.

CONCLUSION

This analysis leads to the conclusion that conditions have not been created as yet that will assure the development of the Congolese economy. In 1978, nearly 20 years after independence, the country still was forced to rely on French cultural, technical, and financial assistance. In effect, 15 years of socialist experimentation have produced economic failure due to a lack of political, administrative, and economic expertise.

Congo has significant resources at its disposal and remarkable potential. The development of hydroelectric power could provide cheap energy for accelerated industrialization. The south has the potential to become a major growth center with two hydroelectric power stations (Kouilou and Loeme); the south still holds further agricultural opportunities, also. A limiting factor to this growth is the weakness of the domestic market, so that there is a need to develop foreign markets. The country should determine to seek a viable economic policy while concerning itself less over political alignments. The debts of public enterprises must be settled so that they might cease being a burden on the economy and begin to become an asset to development.

Since assistance from the socialist countries has proven to be limited

(30 percent of all loans from 1963 to 1973), further help must be sought from Western states. But Congo must commit itself to the prudent spending of Western funds in order to regain the confidence and active participation of those countries. The first steps toward a return to fiscal responsibility and responsible management must, therefore, be taken by the Congolese themselves.