

Belgium's contribution to the fragmentation of the early Democratic Republic of Congo.

Brandi Ledbetter
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Christopher Layson
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ABSTRACT:

The Belgian Parliament adopted the Congo Free State as its colony in 1908, renaming it the Belgian Congo. Belgium poured massive amounts of resources into the Congo in an attempt to rebuild and westernize the colony. However, half a century later Congolese demanded independence and, upon gaining it, the country fell into chaos. The self-governing Congo unraveled within days. As the colonizing power, what had Belgium done or not done that left the Congo in the unprepared state that it was? There had to be severe underlying problems that came to light following independence. This essay endeavors to identify these problems and resolve the question, **How did the social and political policies of Belgian colonial rule contribute to the fragmentation of the early Democratic Republic of Congo?**

To answer the question posed, social and political policies Belgium put in place from occupation in 1908 until the granting of independence in 1960 will be examined and evaluated. Various aspects of fragmentation following 1960 will be examined and connected to the policies of colonial days. The paper will briefly cover the events leading to Belgian colonization, but will focus on the events from 1908-1960 and events immediately following independence in 1960.

After an evaluation of major, Belgian social and political policies, it can be concluded that the Congo was insufficiently prepared to take on the responsibilities of governing their own nation. It can be further concluded that the social and political policies Belgium put in place hindered and even prevented the growth of an independent state. Policies regarding nationalism, Congolese authority, racial integration, education, and independence stunted the growth of the Congolese in each of these crucial areas. The inability of the Congolese, due to policies instituted by the Belgian government, caused the fragmentation of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

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INTRODUCTION

The Congo Free State, a nation in Africa, became a known area following the Berlin Conference of 1884, during which its boundaries were fixed.¹ King Leopold II, the king of Belgium, was authorized by the Belgian Parliament to become sovereign of the Congo Free State by the end of the conference in 1885.² As Leopold II's personal property, the Congo Free State soon became a place of international interest. Leopold's inhumane exportation of rubber became one of the largest disputes of the twentieth century. Continual international pressure caused Leopold to relinquish his personal control of the Free State to the Belgian Parliament. The nation became a colony of Belgium known as the Belgian Congo in 1908.³

The change in ownership seemed to move the Congo in positive directions. Once Belgium had adopted the Congo as its colony it started to rebuild and westernize. Five percent of total Belgian capital was invested into the Congo.⁴ In just the first thirty years, Belgium added 5,000 km of railway, 60,000km of road, 12,000 km of river open to boats, and multiple airlines.⁵ It provided hospitals, leper homes, physicians, schools, missions, post offices, and thousands of miles of telegraph line.^{6 7 8} The Belgian Congo appeared as if it was becoming a very successful colony. However, when the Congolese demanded reform and then independence the world began to see behind Belgium's façade of a prospering colony. When Belgium granted independence to the Democratic Republic of Congo on June 30, 1960, Belgium's failure to prepare the Congo for

¹ Merriam, Alan. United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

² Ibid.

³ Lemarchand, Rene. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Count Lippens. "The Belgian Congo". 38, no. 153 (October 1939): 419-426.

⁶ Merriam, Alan. United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁷ Count Lippens. "The Belgian Congo". 38, no. 153 (October 1939): 419-426.

⁸ Great Britain Foreign Office. Historical Section. 1920. England.

autonomy was clearly displayed through the Congolese incapacity to maintain any type of order or control. The country fell apart within days. The Congolese turned on each other killing thousands of fellow Congolese.⁹ The leaders offered bribes to end fighting, but in the end spent most of the time fighting amongst themselves for power.¹⁰ The military mutinied against their Belgian officers and became an entity loyal to only itself.¹¹ Two different provinces within the Congo, Kantanga and Kasai, seceded and demanded independence.^{12 13} Eventually, this fragmentation would cause the Democratic Republic of Congo to fall into a military autocracy led by the dictator General Joseph-Desire Mobutu, under whom the Congo would partake in genocides, war, and starvation.

What had Belgium done or not done in its role as a colonizing power to leave the Congo in the unprepared state that it was? There had to be severe underlying problems that carried over and surfaced at independence from colonial days. Since most of the fragmentation was political and social, investigating the political and social aspects of Belgian rule provides more direct answers. In other words, **How did the social and political policies of Belgian colonial rule contribute to the fragmentation of the early Democratic Republic of Congo?**

This fragmentation caused struggles the Congo still faces today, making it a relevant area of study for historical purposes and current efforts to turn the nation around. The fragmentation also provides the reason for my personal interest in this topic, as I hope to pursue a future career as a medical practitioner in the Congo. In order to provide aid to present day

⁹ Great Britain Foreign Office. Historical Section. 1920. Belgian Congo. England.

¹⁰ Boya, Odette M. Security Dialogue 32, no. 1 (March 2001): 71-84.

¹¹ Lefever, Ernest W. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1965.

¹² Lemarchand, Rene. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964.

¹³ Great Britain Foreign Office. Historical Section. 1920. England.

Congo, a broader knowledge of the situations that brought the current state into being is crucial. This would not only aid in efforts to turn the nation around, but it would also give people a better understanding of why the Congo is in such distress.

INDEPENDENCE

Belgium's political and social approach to the independence of the Belgian Congo proved to be disastrous. The granting of colonial independence is a delicate and captious process that if pursued the wrong way can have grievous outcomes. The blunder Belgium made concerning Congolese independence was the rushed timeline that engulfed the agreement for independence to the granting of independence. In the short time span of about five months, January to June, Belgium agreed to grant the Congo independence and relinquished control. To put this in perspective, A.A.J van Bilsen of the institute for Colonial Studies in Antwerp had proposed in 1955 a thirty-year independence plan for creating a self-sufficient Congo.¹⁴ Rene Lemarchand claimed in her book, *Political Awakening in the Belgian Congo*, that van Bilsen only set the timeframe in place "to allay possible charges of demagoguery from his countrymen".¹⁵ However, Lefever maintained in *Crisis in the Congo* that the timeframe was produced based on van Bilsen's assessments of necessary preparations in the Congo. In any case, five months is a ridiculously short time to not only get everything in order, but also prepare the colony, especially a colony in the Congo's situation. Belgium rushed the Congo to independence because they wanted to retain friendly relations in order to protect their investments and to maintain their

¹⁴ Lefever, Ernest W. *Crisis in the Congo*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1965.

¹⁵ Lemarchand, Rene. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964.

esteem, leaving the colony on good terms making it more likely to succeed as a nation.¹⁶¹⁷ Prior to independence talks in 1960, Belgium believed they would have plenty of time to decolonize and prepare the Congo for nationhood.¹⁸ They were under the impression that the Congolese would not be pushing for independence for awhile. The Belgian Groupe de Travail had been sent out in 1958 to gather a feel of the Congolese attitudes towards new government and the Belgians had reported a general disinterest.¹⁹ However, they had misjudged Congolese temperaments.²⁰ The Congo independence talks took place in a time period when there was a rising tide of African colonies seeking independence. This spirit contributed greatly to the increasing desire for independence. There were three major events that awakened Congolese to independence, the British decolonization of the Republic of Ghana, the British decolonization of Sudan, and the All-African people's conference held in Ghana in 1958.²¹ These key events helped in the formation of two of the first Congolese political groups, the ABAKO and MNC in 1958.²² The first was led by Joseph Kasawbu, the first head of state, and the latter by Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister.²³ Both groups became strong voices for independence around the time of independence talks. The ABAKO group started the Leopoldville riots for independence in 1959.²⁴ The Belgians panicked at the first indication of trouble, still hoping to maintain a friendly departure, and on October 16, 1959 announced that a Congolese central government would be established the following year.²⁵ Belgium was clearly not expecting the sudden demands. This is

¹⁶ Young, Crawford.

. Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965.

¹⁷ Gondola, Ch, Didier.

Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2002.

¹⁸ Young, Crawford.

. Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ O'Ballance, Edgar.

Great Britain and the United States of America:

Macmillan Press LTD and St. Martin's Press, INC, 2000.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Merriam, Alan.

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

²⁵ Lefever, Ernest W. Crisis in the Congo. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1965.

likely due to their severe misjudgments of Congolese desires. Even in the earliest stages of independence talks Belgium was compromising the quality of a future Congo to avoid any conflict by rushing the process. Congolese dissatisfaction led to the Brussels Round Table Conference on January 20, 1960.²⁶ To their credit Belgians proposed a four-year plan for a transitional period to independence.²⁷ While this was still short, it would have allowed for some preparation. However, Congolese delegates banded together and demanded independence, and since Belgium's most prominent concern was to maintain relations, especially healthy economic relations, they granted the Congolese wishes.²⁸ By June 30, 1960, the Congo was an independent nation, but also a nation headed for disaster. The inexperienced leaders and uneducated people fighting against each other would soon be spiraling into military autocracy and thirty-two years of turmoil, from which the Congo has never recovered.²⁹ The Belgian administration in the process of trying to keep Congolese relations through independence, sacrificed the vital preparations of building capable leaders, ridding tribal divisions by establishing a sense of nationhood amongst the Congolese, integrating racial boundaries, and fully educating the Congolese. These preparations could have prevented fragmentation and built a self-sufficient Democratic Republic of the Congo.

²⁶ Lefever, Ernest W. *Crisis in the Congo*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1965.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ O'Ballance, Edgar.

Great Britain and the United States of America:

Macmillan Press LTD and St. Martin's Press, INC, 2000.

²⁹ Boya, Odette M. "Contentious Politics and Social Change in Congo." *Security Dialogue* 32, no. 1 (March 2001): 71-84.

LACK OF NATIONALISM

Beneath the Congo's façade of a thriving colony were social and political problems in Belgian rule that contributed to eventual fragmentation. First, Belgium instilled and maintained multiple social and political policies that prevented the eventual formation of a unified, nationalist state, namely territorial divisions and population divisions. The Congo was divided into provinces, which split the Congo according to Western political boundaries³⁰. From its creation, the Congo and its fellow African countries were composed to satisfy the colonizing powers' desires. The Berlin Conference and the division of Africa into multiple European colonies divided tribes, separated ethnically related peoples, and attempted to have enemies live not only in peace, but become brothers. The task of creating a unified, nationalist country out of such conditions was an extreme challenge and required extensive strategy. In this Belgium failed. The Belgian administration implemented a social and political policy of province division. The country was divided into six provinces: Kantanga, Kivu, Eastern, Kasai, Equator, and Leopoldville³¹. These provinces were then divided into Districts, which were then broken into Territories and further separated into Native Areas and Sectors³². Through this division, the Belgian government hoped to establish better control over the people, intending to unite them under shared Belgian rule³³. However, the Congolese people "had nations based on certain peoples or nationality groups composed of culturally or linguistically related tribes³⁴." There

³⁰ Lemarchand, Rene.
Press, 1964.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

³¹ Merriam, Alan.
(A8)

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

³² Lemarchand, Rene.
Press, 1964.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

³³ Merriam, Alan.

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961

³⁴ Lemarchand, Rene.
Press, 1964.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

were around 70 prominent ethnic groups redistributed into multiple tribes.³⁵ The division did not aid the Belgian administration in unification of its colonized people, but rather distilled individual groups within the sectors, districts, and provinces which could relate to each other through language or culture. In order to form a colony that could successfully transition into a nation, Belgium needed to transform these fragmented clans, groups, and races into a living unit³⁶.

Secondly, Belgium's continuous re-adjustments to political boundaries added to the Congolese identification with ethnic groups and detachment from an unstable and changing country³⁷. In 1910, the Belgian government reduced the number of districts from 15 to 12³⁸. In 1912, twenty-two districts were implemented³⁹. Two years later, in 1914, the existing districts were placed into four provinces: the Congo-Kasai, the Equateur, the Orientale, and the Kantanga⁴⁰. By 1956, 26 districts and 135 territories were officially registered⁴¹. These constant changes caused the Congolese to turn more toward ethnic groups⁴², because the Belgian colonizing powers offered no constant way to unify the differing regions. After 1933, the Belgian administration actually started to make efforts to divide boundaries to accommodate tribal division⁴³. This social and political policy merely encouraged the Congolese lack of nationalism

³⁵ O'Ballance, Edgar.

Macmillan Press LTD and St. Martin's Press, INC, 2000.

³⁶ Young, Crawford.

Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965. (16)

³⁷ Lemarchand, Rene.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

Press, 1964.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Merriam, Alan.

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁴⁰ Lemarchand, Rene.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

Press, 1964.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Boya, Odette M.

Security Dialogue 32, no. 1 (March 2001): 71-

84.

⁴³ Lemarchand, Rene.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

Press, 1964.

as they were officially divided into many little “nations” under Belgian control. One of the largest problems was the constant violence between the Congolese people following independence in 1960⁴⁴. “The Congolese of one province [were] treated as foreigners by the inhabitants of another province”⁴⁵. The tribes or mini nations within the Congo fought for power, land, and even for the sake of fighting⁴⁶. This violence, due to the lack of nationalism, which transpired from these social and political policies, caused the Congolese to place their loyalties behind various other entities: tribes, provinces, and even their military. This resulted in the fragmentation the Congo experienced.

INEXPERIENCED AUTHORITY

The second area of trouble in Belgian governing before independence was the realm of Congolese leadership. Belgium’s refusal to incorporate Congolese into higher positions of political authority resulted in massive problems for the nation. In order to proceed successfully as a nation after Belgium removed its guidance, the Congo would have to empower able individuals to form a Congolese government to guide the country. The Congo’s ability to succeed on its own rested heavily on the knowledge, character, and experience the individuals chosen to lead possessed. The task to instill the experience and knowledge of how to guide a new country in a predominantly Western world fell to the Congo’s colonizing power, Belgium. Belgium was the solitary western influence that could train Congolese authority. However, Alan Merriam, a historian who was on his second field trip in the Congo during the independence

⁴⁴ Merriam, Alan.

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Lemarchand, Rene.
Press, 1964.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

crisis, says “Belgium failed to build a group of educated Congolese who could participate in government and give the country mature leadership.”⁴⁷ This failure occurred because of two specific Belgian social and political policies, the system of chefferies and Congolese isolationism.

Through the system of chefferies Belgium constructed a façade that portrayed incorporation of Congolese into the political runnings of the colony. The system emanated from the Theory of Native Autonomy, providing autonomy within the framework of native institutions.⁴⁸ The system was ideally supposed to create chefferies, local political units, led by a native chief.⁴⁹ However, the system was flawed. First, it was in reality a way for Belgians to indirectly rule the Congo under the pretense of native autonomy. “A chief’s job was to communicate to his subjects the instructions issued by Belgian administration, collect taxes according to rates prescribed in local ordinances, and other duties as requested by administration”.⁵⁰ His job was threatened if he did not comply.⁵¹ In essence, the chief was a puppet in the hands of Belgian puppeteers. This was detrimental to the growth of experienced Congolese leaders. Through the system of chefferies, potential Congolese leaders learned not how to lead themselves, but how to rely on other powers to guide their people. The system of chefferies provided no training, merely the first step in native reliance on outer power and a distrust of native leadership amongst the people. Despite the façade, evidence shows that Belgium leaned toward a policy that isolated Congolese from important positions within the government. The Belgian Congo was administered by a Belgian central metropolitan government

⁴⁷ Merriam, Alan.

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁴⁸ Lemarchand, Rene.
Press, 1964.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

⁴⁹ Gondola, Ch. Didier.

Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2002.

⁵⁰ Lemarchand, Rene.
Press, 1964.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

⁵¹ Great Britain. Foreign Office. Historical Section. 1920.

England.

located in the Congo,⁵² and governed through a Belgian Governor-General and governor heading each province.⁵³ These bodies represented the crown in the colony.⁵⁴ There were two main advisory units, the Conseil de Gouvernement and the Conseil de Province.⁵⁵ The Congolese had no or at most very little say in this governmental system,⁵⁶ causing the Congolese to have very little interest in the political realm.⁵⁷ This lack of interest contributed to the sparse, inexperienced leadership the Congo would be faced with at Independence. Until 1947 with the admittance of two Africans, 10 years before independence, both advisory units had been composed of only Europeans.⁵⁸ Between 1951 and 1957, the number of African members in the Provincial Councils increased from only 8 to 12 and 3 to 6.⁵⁹ This was only 3 years before Belgium granted the Congo independence, and the Congolese involved in the major political units only increased by 7 members over six years. On June 30, 1960, the Congo was granted independence, but as of July 1, 1960, 9,000 top and middle range administration positions were still held by Belgians.⁶⁰ The Belgian government isolated Congolese from leadership positions and failed to politically integrate them into the country's governmental framework. This political failure contributed to the fragmentation because the Congo then had to face independence with inadequate leadership. One of the largest factors that played into the disaster the Congo spiraled into only a month after gaining independence, was the immaturity and inability the Congolese leadership displayed. The Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, and Head of State, Joseph

⁵² Merriam, Alan. United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁵³ Lefever, Ernest W. Crisis in the Congo. Washington D.C. : The Brookings Institution, 1965.

⁵⁴ Merriam, Alan. United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁵⁵ Lemarchand, Rene. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964.

⁵⁶ Merriam, Alan. United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁵⁷ Lemarchand, Rene. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Lefever, Ernest W. Crisis in the Congo. Washington D.C. : The Brookings Institution, 1965.

Kasavubu, spent most of their short term fighting for power and against Belgian aid, making continually changing demands of the United Nations, offering bribes to end fighting, playing tensions of the Cold War, and ultimately handing power over to a military dictatorship, while their country spiraled into more chaos without leadership.⁶¹ ⁶²While Lumumba, Kasavubu, and the other leaders were partially to blame for the disaster, Belgium was as well. Belgium failed to train mature, experienced, and able leaders to guide their colony. As a result, the Congo was placed in the hands of leaders without the ability or skills to govern a country that was already unstable. The government therefore disintegrated and fell into a harsh dictatorship.

FAILED RACIAL INTEGRATION

The third area of weakness within Belgium's social and political rule was its approach to repairing segregation. Belgium failed to produce a social solution for the racial separation and discrimination, which would cause much of the destruction in the later nation. During Belgium's control of the Congo, substantial racial discrimination and inequality presented itself. There was an ingrained white superiority which resulted in differences in penal codes, restriction on Africans in government, and separation of living places and their quality.⁶³ To their credit, the Belgian government did recognize the racial situation and tried to overcome it by instituting social and political policies.⁶⁴ However, Belgium made two errors. First, Belgium tried to bring

⁶¹ O'Ballance, Edgar.

Great Britain and the United States of America:

Macmillan Press LTD and St. Martin's Press, INC, 2000.

⁶² Boya, Odette M. "Contentious Politics and Social Change in Congo." Security Dialogue 32, no. 1 (March 2001): 71-84.

⁶³ Merriam, Alan.

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁶⁴ A Belgian Observer. "Belgians Examine the Congo." Africa Today, 4 No. 4 (Jul-Aug, 1957): 9-11.

mutual tolerance through legal action.⁶⁵ By 1953, Congolese could own their own land and 1955 saw the granting of access to public establishments and permission to buy alcohol.⁶⁶ While these changes came with good intentions, they revealed Belgium's basic error. Belgium thought that racial discrimination could be "legislated out of existence".⁶⁷ They did nothing to improve the human relations aspect of the conflicting races. The unsolved discrimination caused much bitterness from the Congolese. Even in the months of their greatest need after independence, Congolese would refuse Belgian aid and demand the exodus of Belgian inhabitants to ensure an end to Belgian superiority.⁶⁸

Belgium's second error regarding racial integration was its failure to recognize and address extensive racial separation that occurred within the Congo's society because of its main social and political policy of paternalism. Paternalism was a Belgian policy in which Congolese were looked upon as children that Belgium was responsible to parent. This policy had grievous effects on the attitudes of both white inhabitants and the Congolese. There was a deeply embedded feeling from Congolese that Europeans were supposed to provide and do what the Africans couldn't.⁶⁹ The white inhabitants took the leading role in society, allowing a white driven society. Whites took over important positions and leadership roles in which Congolese were not trained. More than 90 percent of the high-skilled positions and managerial posts in the Congo were run by foreigners.⁷⁰ In his chronological review of the Belgian Congo, Edgar

⁶⁵ Lemarchand, Rene.
Press, 1964.

Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Merriam, Alan.

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Gondola, Ch. Didier.

Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2002.

O'Ballance implied that Belgium paid little attention to this aspect of their colony.⁷¹ This assessment appears accurate due to the fact that when the country gained its independence it immediately spiraled into chaos. The mass exodus of Europeans began, most feeling the benefits of living and continuing business in the Congo didn't outweigh the risk the violence presented.⁷² European civil servants and business men poured out of the Congo and there was no-one to take their positions, leaving the country in severe economic distress. The Congo was left with holes in thousands of key societal roles because Belgium had not racially integrated the Congolese into higher job positions. Belgium did not fully recognize the repercussions a racially un-integrated society would have and as a result the Congo was handicapped and pushed into further fragmentation.

EDUCATION

The fourth area of trouble was the education of Congolese. Belgium's social and political policy of education and its minimal areas of study caused ripples of consequence which yielded fragmentation within the Congo. Education provides the framework for the training of generations who will lead the country, equalization of races, and instilling nationalism. Belgium was unable to provide this necessity for the Congolese. Despite the fact that Ernest Lefever says in *Crisis in the Congo* that the Belgian Congo had one of the highest literacy rates in Africa at about 40 to 60%⁷³, their education system lacked depth. This failure was the consequence of their system of paternalism. It constantly caused Belgians to look down upon the Congolese as

⁷¹ O'Ballance, Edgar. Macmillan Press LTD and St. Martin's Press, INC, 2000.

Great Britain and the United States of America:

⁷² Merriam, Alan.

United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁷³ Lefever, Ernest W. *Crisis in the Congo*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1965.

less deserving than the typical European man or woman. This was reflected in the general Belgian stance on Congolese education. They tried to give all Congolese a primary education, but discouraged secondary or university schooling.⁷⁴ This is confirmed by a survey taken in 1958. At the time there were 1,400,000 children in a primary school, less than 25,000 Congolese had received secondary education, and there were only 30 university graduates in the entire country.⁷⁵ “Belgium did not realize that a progressive education was necessary until it was too late”.⁷⁶ Belgium gave the Congolese an extreme disadvantage through this policy. By giving them enough knowledge to contribute economically, Belgium guided the Congolese toward agricultural, manual work as opposed to scholarly, professional work.⁷⁷ They wanted to create a lower middle class with limited political awareness, motivated by a desire for stability and material progress.⁷⁸⁷⁹ This worked great for the Belgians on a political and economic level, but once again they failed to envision how it would affect future happenings within the Congo. Belgium had basically created a workforce with all the benefits and no hassle. The Congolese were given enough basic education to function as economic assets, but not enough to interfere with the political or social structure Belgium had placed upon the colony. This system functioned fine until the Congolese abruptly gained independence. Congolese adults, the majority having no more than an elementary level education, had to become knowledgeable citizens. The Congo needed leaders, but the Belgian educational system had crippled most potential leaders by keeping them in low manual positions with only a primary education. The Congo needed to bring together its people into a thriving nationalist state, but the majority of its

⁷⁴ Merriam, Alan. United States of America: Northwestern University Press, 1961.

⁷⁵ Lefever, Ernest W. Crisis in the Congo. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1965.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Count Lippens. “The Belgian Congo.” 38, no. 153 (October 1939): 419-426.

⁷⁸ Young, Crawford. Princeton and New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965.

⁷⁹ Gondola, Ch. Didier. Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 2002.

citizens could not fully understand the changes happening within their government or grasp the meaning of independence. The Congo needed to work with Europeans to build their country, but their segregated education had not taught them to live in harmony with other races. Belgium's failure to foresee the damage their educational system would create for the Congolese added to three major problems in the Congo: inability to comprehend nationalism, inexperienced authority, and failed racial integration. These three issues caused much of the previously mentioned fragmentation that occurred within the Congo.

CONCLUSION

My topic, the fragmentation of the Congo, was focused on finding out how different political and social aspects of the Belgian colonial rule contributed to the fragmentation of the Democratic Republic of Congo. My research indicated that all of the fragmentation aspects addressed in my paper: lack of nationalism, inexperienced leadership, failed racial integration, inadequate education, and unprepared independence, stemmed from various social and political policies that Belgium placed on the Congo. Belgium governed the Congo as a colony, not as a colony with the potential to be a future nation. The social and political policies it then made reflected this, policies that would enhance a colony for exploitation not a self-sufficient nation. They caused the Congolese to lack crucial nation-building elements such as unity, experience, and knowledge; in essence leaving the Congolese unprepared and incapable of forming a nation. I can conclude that the social and political policies with which Belgium governed impaired the Congo to the point of an incapacity to form an independent nation, leading to unavoidable fragmentation upon independence.

The evidence I presented throughout my investigation supports this conclusion because Belgium was behind every proposed cause of fragmentation. First, Belgium failed to create Congolese nationalism. Provincial divisions and readjustment policies divided Congolese, forbidding any sense of nationalism. The Congolese people didn't want to become a country and thus were incapable of forming a unified nation. Second, Belgium did not train up Congolese leadership. The social and political policies of chefferies and Congolese isolation excluded Congolese from political experience. The Congo had unprepared leaders and thus no way to maintain order and move forward. Third, Belgium's social and political policies failed to integrate the European and African races into society. This resulted in a country run by foreigners, who fled at the first sign of trouble leaving the Congo in severe economic distress. Fourth, Belgium educated the Congolese as minimally as possible. This produced a nation of people with little knowledge, who were then unable to aid in maintaining the Congo. Finally, Belgium rushed the independence process. The policy of friendly independence destroyed crucial preparations for nationhood. Thus, Belgium had no time to correct the problems their social and political policies regarding nationalism, leadership, race, and education would create. The Congo was insufficiently prepared and injured by the effects of Belgian colonization, and thus was incapable of survival. Belgium's social and political policies damaged crucial blocks needed to build a nation, causing the fragmentation of the fledgling Congo. A further investigation into the social and political policies of different colonial powers in Africa could provide beneficial means of comparison.

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