

EXCURSUS 1

Rollins E. Lambert on
ZAIRE, 1980

The first stop on Pope John Paul II's journey to Africa in May was Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire. Zaire, once the Belgian Congo, has one of the largest Catholic populations on the African continent (about 43 per cent of its citizens), and its forty-seven bishops constitute the largest Catholic hierarchy in Africa. President Mobutu Sese Seko followed the pope closely through his several appearances in Zaire. Surely he was hoping that some of John Paul's popularity would rub off on him; though Mobutu has held power for fifteen years, the sorry condition of the country makes him the target of both internal and international criticism.

"The mismanagement of the economy passes belief," wrote *The Economist* in 1978. "Twenty years ago Zaire was a net food exporter. Now it spends \$300 million a year on importing food." The same report noted that Mobutu's expenses in running the presidency "are said to gobble up a third of the gross national product."

More alarming than presidential excesses or incompetence is the so-called "Zairean sickness," *mal zairois*, a moral not a medical illness that has been diagnosed by the country's Catholic bishops. Archbishop Kabanga of Lubumbashi, for one, in 1976 described one manifestation of the disease as the greed for money that "transforms men into assassins." He cited as examples the men who are unemployed because unable to bribe employers for a job; the taxi-drivers who endanger pedestrians and passengers alike by reckless efforts to increase their fares; the hospitals that are without medicines, although the medicines are available in the markets; the judges who demand pay-offs for hearing a case and the prisoners who remain forgotten because someone's palm needs greasing to release a dossier; the children who are not

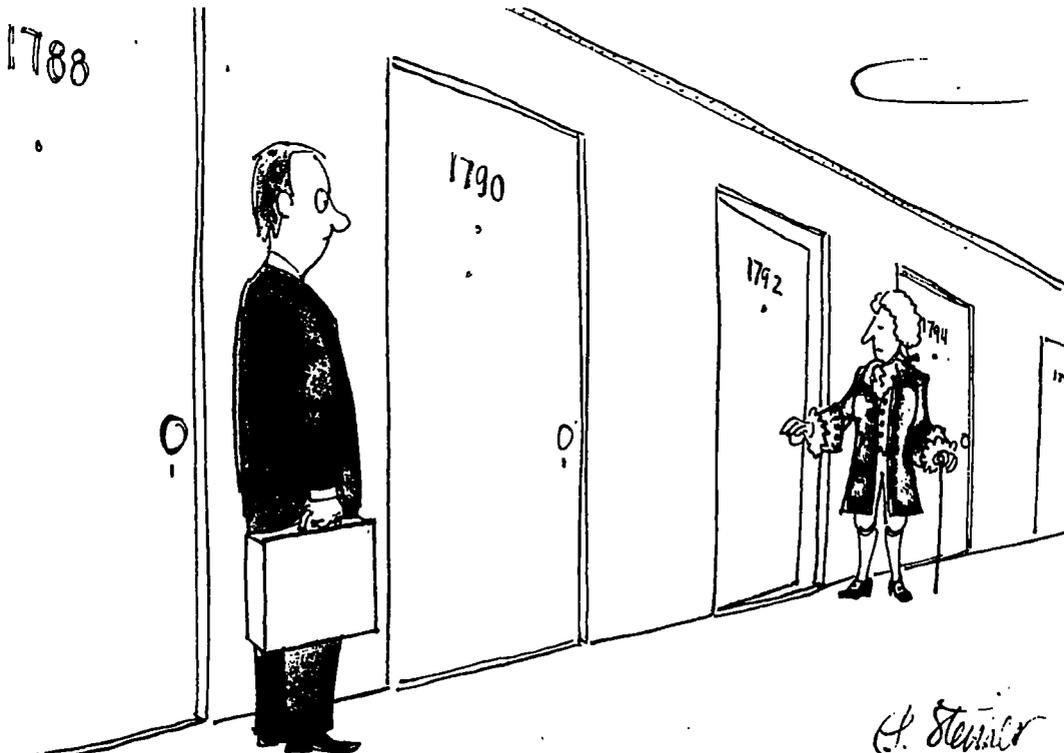
admitted to school, lacking the wherewithal to bribe the director.

By 1978 the situation was so serious that the whole Zairean episcopate addressed "the urgent problems which the present situation of our country poses to our consciences as citizens and as pastors.... We point out...irresponsibility and lack of principle, corruption, injustice in all its forms, public immorality, scarcity of food and pharmaceutical products, juvenile delinquency, and fresh outbreak of violence."

The most detailed study in English of contemporary Zaire is *Zaire: The Political Economy of Underdevelopment* (Praeger, 1979), with contributions by its editor, Guy Gran, a freelance, Washington-based international development consultant, and thirteen others. Gran's "sad conclusions" in the book's final chapter square with the bishops: "Zaire is one of the worst run, most inhumane economies on the globe." But Gran goes further in assigning the cause of Zaire's misery:

The Zairian poor, given only the voices of a few scholars, journalists, and bureaucrats in the world system, have no politically effective voice in this system. Indeed, the system has no use for them at this moment in history, needing these poor only marginally as either workers or consumers. At this writing, it has not proved possible even to engage the world system managers in a substantive dialogue about the creation of an alternative future wherein the Zairian people eat. Chase Manhattan is interested simply in its money. The U.S. State Department will not institutionalize new ideas. Nor will the World Bank. The International Monetary Fund does not deign to recognize people, never mind ideas. Without more citizens engaged in more participatory development the world over, there is but one clear certainty: 18 to 22 million Zairians, most of the society, will face the 1980's with a brief, hungry, and painful life as their only future. Human beings deserve more.

Gran is not alone in assigning wider blame. According to a 1976 Peace Corps evaluation, "Whatever Zaire has



become today, both politically and economically, the U.S. assumes a large share of the responsibility." Said *South African Outlook* in 1977: "Zaire is a house of cards," and "on that flimsy structure the United States has built one of the pillars of U.S. policy in Africa." The United States Government is certainly aware of the situation. In February, 1980, the State Department reported to the Congress on the sorry state of Zaire and its people, listing several reasons for the situation—some of them external, such as the rise in petroleum prices, an inability to transport products for export, and a drop in copper prices. And the report continued:

Bad judgment, poor management, and corruption, abetted by international businesses, caused most of the effective destruction of what had once been a thriving economy with a healthy agricultural sector.

One is led to suspect that the international community likes what is going on in Zaire. Obviously, it is willing to support the Mobutu regime. In 1979 the U.S. Export-Import Bank loaned \$119.2 million to Zaire, more than ten times the 1978 sum. Other U.S.-based loans amounted to \$123.2 million, not to mention the \$45.4 million in economic and military assistance. International agencies committed themselves in 1979 to \$56.6 million in assistance to Zaire.

Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Richard Moose testified to a House subcommittee in March, 1980, that support of Mobutu is in the interests of the United States. A Catholic missionary who has worked in Zaire believes it is even in the interests of the Church, stating in an interview reported in *National Catholic News* last May:

To collaborate with Mobutu means to collaborate with a system in which at the lower levels there is much corruption, oppression, abuses....The church has to make a choice, and I believe despite the regime's weaknesses, it's better to collaborate with Mobutu....If Mobutu goes, anarchy reigns.

Belgium, Zaire's one-time colonizer, and France are now actively campaigning to extend their influence in Africa. Both countries are more deeply involved in the exploitation of Zaire's wealth than is the United States. Belgian and French investment surpasses U.S. investment there, and both countries cooperated with the Mobutu government in suppressing a revolt in 1978, with some assistance by the U.S. Yet the fact remains that the average citizen of Zaire considers the United States the most important influence in maintaining Mobutu's power and its accompanying oppression and corruption.

The Interreligious Task Force on U.S. Food Policy in testimony to a U.S. congressional committee last March, urged a serious cutback of U.S. aid:

We would place Zaire at the bottom of our list of countries in terms of potential aid effectiveness. Zaire's need for aid is indisputably high: 60% of the population lives in abject poverty. In terms of our other criteria, however, Zaire ranks very low. There is very little evidence of commitment to equitable development....The economy is in the hands of a politico-economic elite which is urban-oriented and concerned with personal consumption. Corruption is widespread—it is estimated that up to 40% of government funds are pocketed by government officials....We see no current justification for an aid increase and seriously question Zaire's capacity or will to use aid effectively to meet the basic human needs of its poor majority.

Yet the U.S. Government continues to pour money into

Zaire, applying some pressures on that country to spend the money properly. A modest degree of success is claimed by our government officials, who must report occasionally to the Congress. Meanwhile the situation festers, threatening further rebellions and perhaps eventually chaos.

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EXCURSUS 2

Thomas Land on LEVIATHANS REPRIEVED

The European Community is about to phase out the import of all whale products by its nine member countries. The policy, intended to save what remains of the world's whale population, springs from proposals originally put forward by Britain. A U.S. ban is already in effect.

Four members of the Community—Britain, France, Denmark, and Holland—are represented on the International Whaling Commission, which has just defeated a call for a worldwide ban on all commercial whaling. Instead, it cut by 13 per cent the quota on whales that may be taken. The commission met in Brighton in late July amidst the much-publicized attempts of a group of Canadian environmental activists to purchase a British trawler suitable for ramming pirate whalers on the high seas.

At present the European Community imports 35 per cent of all sperm whale oil, which is used mainly in lubricants, and 14 per cent of all baleen whale oil, an important ingredient in margarine. Oils are also used by the leather and cosmetics industries, though suitable substitutes are widely available.

The Community considers that the international measures guided by the whaling commission have been either inadequate or adopted too late to prevent stocks of endangered species from falling to extremely low levels because of overhunting. As a result, it may now prove difficult, if not impossible, for the diminished population to recover its original size. Many international organizations now seek to establish sanctuaries for threatened marine mammals. The influential British group Friends of the Earth has responded to the decisions of the whaling commission by calling for the creation of a sanctuary in the North Atlantic.

Friends of the Earth has welcomed the Community's decision, while emphasizing that its measure should have been taken sooner. Other environmentalists have already taken direct action, some spectacular, to chase pirate whalers off the seas. *Rainbow Warrior*, a vessel of the Canadian Greenpeace movement, and its eighteen passengers, including a four-member British television crew, was recently taken into custody by a Spanish warship. Allegedly, it had interfered with unauthorized whaling operations in the Atlantic.

Paul Watson of Vancouver is currently negotiating on behalf of another North American pressure group for the purchase of a hull trawler specifically for the ramming of pirate whalers. The boat is to be named *Sea Shepherd II*; *Sea Shepherd I* was used in the ramming of the pirate whaler *Sierra* off the coast of Portugal last year. Eventually it was scuttled.