

# The Community of Kipaka

By Fr. Tino Yerdgui WF. and Fr. Hans-Otto Wiene WF. \*

The parish of **Kipaka** is in the Diocese of Kasongo. It consists of thirty-two Christian communities, spread over an area of 1,522 sq.mls (2,450 sq.kms.), in a population of 60,000 persons, of whom one-third are Muslims. The roads are bad and we go about either on foot or on motorcycle. The war has caused great misery, and the people are still suffering. In 1999 one thousand houses were burned and their inhabitants lost everything. The parish itself was completely looted and one colleague was wounded by a bullet. We had to abandon the parish and only came back in May, 2000.

## THE COMMUNITY

At present we are two Missionaries of Africa and one Brother belonging to a diocesan congregation. Two other colleagues are living with us for the moment, but they are responsible for the parish of Mingana, about forty-five miles from **Kipaka**, and they will soon be leaving us to go and live there permanently.

We meet three times a day for community prayer, and each one has his own rhythm of personal prayer. We try to stick to the weekly council and to take decisions together. We usually do the monthly retreat together, but occasionally we do it in private. An important part of our life is the daily 'evening recreation' when we relax and talk informally about the activities of the day.

## PASTORAL WORK

The major elements of pastoral strategy are determined together in council. Our principal focus is on the Christian communities. We try and visit them regularly, when the security situation allows, and during our visits we conduct sessions of recollection for the Christians and

hold special meetings for catechists and leaders.

In principle we have longer sessions in the parish itself two or three times a year, but since our return the situation has made it impossible to hold them. We would like to pay more attention to the youth through movements like the **Kisito-Anwarite**, **Young People of Light**, **Legion of Mary**. This should be straightforward enough, but we do not reach the majority of young people.

## DEVELOPMENT

Development activities have had to be reduced at present, but the possibilities are enormous. Roads, bridges, wells, fields, adult literacy: these are all areas calling for attention. The Diocese has appointed lay leaders for development, and they visit villages and organize sessions. One colleague dedicates himself especially to the poor and to medical care for the destitute. There is a hospital, directed by a Protestant Church. The medical director is a Catholic, and we cooperate with the hospital for the care of the sick. Within the committee of development there is a group of widows who have a difficult life. They have set up a small workshop to make soap.

The war and the whole unsettled situation have produced a number of children suffering from kwashiorkor. They receive help from the parish through development leaders and with the cooperation of certain mothers. There is also in the parish a group of refugees and displaced persons who have been there for four years. The parish committee for **Justice and Peace** has been functioning for the last year, and it is at present making an effort to raise consciousness about the situation and about the results of the war: poverty, injustice, and tribal hatred. The committee has found the courage to denounce

some of the worst abuses, like theft and military indiscipline. Their work is in depth, and their activities are practical and important, even if they will never be published by **Amnesty International**. The war has destroyed human relationships and ancient conflicts have revived, so that the problem of **Justice and Peace** is very much a domestic one for the village community.

## WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES?

### JUSTICE AND PEACE

We try and integrate issues of **Justice and Peace** into our catechesis and pastoral work generally. We help the different committees to tackle local problems and in particular to accept responsibility for the poor through help and sharing. As we have noted above, we are still at the stage of consciousness-raising, which means showing people that they must not always be appealing for help to the local chief or the missionaries. We insist that the group aims at personal conversion and really live **Justice and Peace** itself, in personal relationships in the village, for this is where the real 'fracture-lines' are. Forgiveness and Reconciliation in daily life are the only means of healing the wounds in society. There has to be dedication to truth and recognition of personal fault. Evidently all this cannot be the work of a day.

### INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

We try to cultivate good relations with the major religions and different Churches. In some villages Christians and Muslims have worked together to build a church or a mosque, and there is no distinction in the distribution of aid. We help the non-Catholics, and when we were looted the Muslims showed practical concern. Relations with the sects are more difficult, for



they are often hostile towards all other religious groups. Our parish would be an ideal place for a colleague wanting to work with Muslims, for they constitute between 25% and 30% of the population.

## THE YOUTH

Young people constitute a huge field of apostolate which we only touch with great difficulty, outside established movements like **Anwarite-Kisito** and **Bilenge**. There are four Secondary Schools in the parish. We used to have a library where young people could come and read, but everything was looted. We are trying to reconstitute it. We have some football teams, and before the latest war some of them took part in two championships.

## CONCLUSION

We believe that what we are living and doing has meaning and is genuinely missionary activity. If a young colleague wishes to share his life with us and with the people, we believe that he will find happiness here in living with the poor, the sick, and the unknown. We do indeed

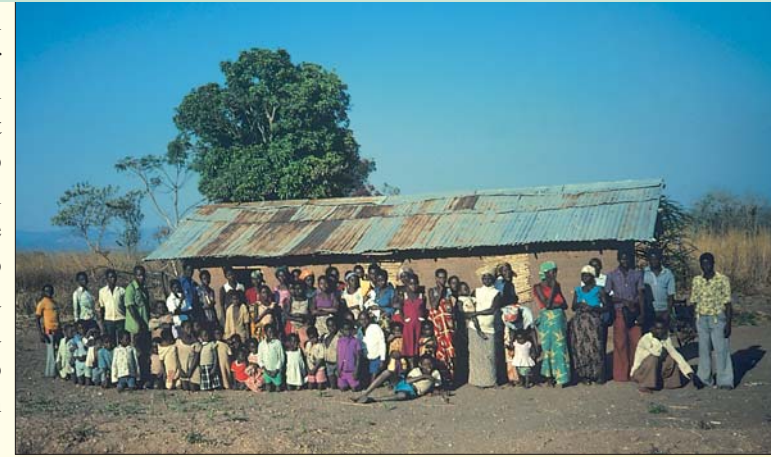
Picture above: Members of the Legion of Mary

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live along fracture lines where it is important to share the life and the insecurities of the people among whom we live. We feel called to being present and remaining, recognizing more and more our powerlessness and our limits, but trusting firmly in Jesus who spent thirty years without being noticed, apart from a little adventure in the Temple. We live the fears and tensions of the population, often feeling pushed

to the limit faced with so many elements about which we can do nothing. We believe that when we come to the end of our days, no one is going to ask us about our opinions concerning dialogue and inculturation. But enquiry may well be made about where we spent our life and to what extent we shared it with others. We shall be happy if we are able to answer: "We spent our lives with the poor."

engage in, no nothing. Once in a while I would say to a senior member: "You have to be an old bachelor, not knowing what else to do with your life to go on living here; I'm off to a real Mission country." The silence was everywhere. From time to time we could hear the sound of the **Mai-Mai** fighters, dressed as nature intended, that is to say naked, as they paraded with their weapons and equipment.



dialogue. I cannot give myself a pat on the back for having administered the Sacraments in a year and a half of priesthood, etc. What is worse, I cannot be sure that the people of **Kipaka** are grateful to me for being at their side in these difficult times. At given times I feel all this is frustrating. In fact, it is not worthwhile being in such a predicament. The only comfort I had in my exploits was the following assertion, "when we were forced out of our 'hovels', we knew that you Fathers were always at our side and that there was still cause for hope".

**THE PEOPLE NEEDED ME TO BE AT THEIR SIDE**  
Furthermore, I did not come to the White Fathers because I had a contemplative vocation. However, I discovered that mission contains a substantial contemplative element without which I would live without reflecting on my actions. In practice, I learned to live out my current mission in being receptive to the disclosure of another person's injuries and wounds. In this way, I moved from acquiring to offering, from gathering up to welcoming in. I could not dispense with the 'demand' aspect of all kinds of material help, but I realised over time that the people needed me to be at their side, regardless of what exactly I did for them. Of course they did not give much away about the degree to which our presence is

Picture above: Waiting for Benediction at Mpungwe Church

## Sent To Whom And For What?

By Fr. Jean-Paul Guibila WF.\*

### MY MISSIONARY VOCATION IN THIS SITUATION

After ordination in June 2001, I was appointed to the South East Province of Congo, to **Kipaka Parish**. As a fresh young man, planning to change the world by all sorts of activities, I set out for my parish appointment full of dreams and enthusiasm. The honeymoon only lasted eight months because, even as I write these lines, the heavy tread of boots can still be heard. Fear, insecurity and the need to be ready for a possible flight into the bush increase ominously. This menacing atmosphere that changed our fracture zone into, according to one senior member, a zone of deadly silence has lasted since the 16th. June, 2002. How can mission be lived in such an environment? Or to put it more personally, how do I see my missionary vocation where Christians are frequently on the move into the bush, leaving us Missionaries in the village? Here I would like to share with you my mission in reference to the people of **Kipaka**, then my assessment of my spiritual progress relating to mission, including my relationship to Christ. I will conclude on mission and community in war zones.

### SENT TO THE PEOPLE OF KIPAKA? AGREED, BUT WHERE ARE THEY?

On Sunday 16th. June, 2002, just when the Communion procession was in progress a gunshot rang out; it was the entry of the **Mai-Mai** forces into our parish and the beginning of agony for the population of **Kipaka** and the surrounding villages. In the days that followed, the people began to disappear one by one into the forest to escape possible reprisals from belligerent groups. The population fled each time there was conflict. The people stayed in the forest for periods varying from two to four weeks. <sup>[01]</sup> Imagine a village of four or five thousand inhabitants, where the parish is constantly full of people gathered for various reasons. All of a sudden it is emptied of all its occupants, leaving only the usual residents, two Europeans and two Africans. I felt really idiotic there; I was probably a fool, but not a fool for Christ. It was to a certain extent suffering from a mental illness that prevented me from making a proper judgement about my life. There were no planned apostolic activities; no visits to the basic Christian communities, no inter-religious dialogue to

### WHAT ON EARTH AM I DOING HERE?

By contrast the Rebels of the Congolese Union for Democracy would arrive with great pomp and ceremony to seek (in their terms) some provisions of food, medicine and cigarettes, etc. In such situations, I frequently asked myself the following question in particular: "What on earth am I doing here, whereas the people for whom I came are refugees in the bush, leaving me here alone?" I must say I have not been able to reply satisfactorily to this question. The following is as far as I have got.

### I CANNOT GIVE MYSELF A PAT ON THE BACK

The White Fathers' Chapter of 1998 underscored that mission places us in the midst of helplessness. I can see the truth of that today. Helplessness for me is to be alone and powerless in the face of rival groups who hunt out and kill one another. This aggravates economic, social and spiritual deprivation for the peaceable populations who only want to live in freedom from strife. When I look at myself in depth, I feel that these questions come from my lack of well-planned activities in view of rescuing the 'poor **Wazimba**' (the people with whom I work). In fact every day I feel increasingly that my presence here is somehow unrewarded. I cannot boast of having done **Justice and Peace** sessions or inter-religious

\* Fr. Jean-Paul Guibila is a White Father from Burkina Faso. This article first appeared in 'Petit Echo', No. 945 - 2003/9. Editor's Foot Note 01: The foot note on the **Mai-Mai (Mayi-Mayi)** may be found on page 8. Maps and further background information on the D.R. Congo is on pages 12-17.

## THE MAI-MAI - EDITOR'S NOTE

The **Mai-Mai** (*Mayi-Mayi*) is the main militia group fighting in the North and South Kivu, and Katanga regions of eastern **D.R. Congo**. They have their roots in the 'Mulele Rebellion' of 1964, led by Pierre Mulele, which tried to topple President Mobutu. The 'Rebellion' broke out around Kikwit, in Bandundu province, and the **Mai-Mai** were launched later that year in the east. The **Mai-Mai** is not a single entity but a collection of different factions under various commanders. The fighters come from various ethnic groups such as the Banande, Batembo, Banyaga and Hunde. Over the years the **Mai-Mai** have changed their allegiance to achieve local aims. During the war that brought President Laurent Désiré Kabila to power (1996-97), they fought beside the Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsis) against the Rwandese **Interahamwe** militias and **Rwandan Government Forces (ex-FAR)**. Also 10,000-25,000 **Mai-Mai** youth joined the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (**ADFL**) at this time, but kept their own identity and afterwards returned to North Kivu.

The **Mai-Mai** do not wage an organised guerrilla war, or have clear political objectives. The **fighters** carry out small-scale attacks on: the Rwandan Army, the **Rassemblement congolais pour la democratie (RCD, Congolese Rally for Democracy)**, and the local population, especially the Banyamulenge, to terrorise them and to obtain provisions and the manpower. The **Mai-Mai** militias, alongside the **Interahamwe** and **ex-FAR** troops, direct hate speech and violence against the Banyamulenge, estimated to number 150,000, who have been in North Kivu for over two hundred years, but the Congolese authorities question their citizenship. This was a key issue in the 1996-97 war after which Laurent Kabila, their one time ally, promoted the ethnic tension. The **Mai-Mai** have committed many human rights abuses which include: murder, rape and cannibalism - the latter was reported when the fighters, including children, ate the hearts of enemies in order to stop their souls going to heaven. It is impossible to know the number of people killed, wounded and displaced due to **Mai-Mai** activity.

Members of the **Mai-Mai** promote the myth that they are invulnerable thanks to magic water ('**Mai**') that protects them from bullets. Vines, leaves or grass around their heads are supposed to make them invisible. The myths have helped to entice recruits, especially children, but older recruits are drawn partly due to the lack social and economic opportunities and by the promise of weapons, a better life, ethnic solidarity, and wealth. All the groups and countries that have been active have taken advantage of the country's wealth. The **Mai-Mai** exploit deposits of gold, diamonds and coltan (a mineral used in mobile phones). It is suggest that some business and political leaders in North Kivu exaggerate the strength of the **Mai-Mai** so as to keep the region in chaos, giving them the opportunity to exploit the natural resources.

The **Mai-Mai** were not party to the 1999 Lusaka Peace Agreement but take part in the process of building the **D.R. Congo's** future. Discussions were held between them and the **Congolese Rally for Democracy-Goma (RCD-Goma)** and it is believed that **Mai-Mai** fighters have been integrated into their force. Further talks took place in an attempt to incorporate members of **RCD-Goma** and **Mai-Mai** into a new police force. The United Nations Observer Mission to Congo (**MONUC**) are gradually gathering **Mai-Mai** forces ready for demobilisation, integration into the **D.R. Congo's** national army, and retraining the former combatants, including children.

comforting and meaningful to them. I think however, they do appreciate something. Otherwise, why would they converge on the Mission in the first place to get news, advice or a word of guidance?

True communion, when it is by physical interaction with another, (speech, touch), happens also on the spiritual level (prayer) and on the level of compassion (suffering with the other through whatever is holding him captive). The level of compassion was the union I discovered with the people of **Kipaka**. It is manifest in the knowledge that someone else is at hand for me at this time of powerlessness and that our aspiration to **Justice and Peace** for all is identical. Whether the people are in the village or in the bush, whether there is silence around me or not, at the time of writing I am convinced that, along with the people of **Kipaka**, we aspire by all we are and do, to one thing only. Here and now, we seek to enter into the **Kingdom of Justice and Peace** proclaimed by Christ.

### THE ULTIMATE ANSWER, I HEARD IT ON THE LIPS OF A MAI-MAI FIGHTERS

The ultimate answer to my question mentioned above I heard on the lips of the **Mai-Mai** fighters. One afternoon while I was chatting with the Parish Priest, two or three **Mai-Mai** entered our house. After the customary greetings, they stayed on the veranda gazing at the flowerpots. They asked the Parish Priest if he ate the plants. The Parish Priest said no. One asked if it were only for decoration that they had them there. This was followed by a few minutes of silence. Then he continued: "Lakini ninyi Wazungu. Mupo mu namna yenu, i.e. You Whites, you are special." Another joined in: "Hata, watu wote wanakimbia, wao wanabakia, tu. Hawaogopi. i.e Even when



everyone else flees the village, they remain. They are not afraid." They then continued to stick around for a while, looking intently at us in silence, before moving on. There is no doubt that these **Mai-Mai**, if only by their attitude, showed a kind of admiration and wonder in that we, as outsiders, could choose to share the fate of the inhabitants, even though we had nothing to do with the conflict.

### NOT A CANDIDATE FOR MARTYRDOM

I am not in the slightest envious that the admiration they showed was for my white colleagues. In fact, more than once they saw me in the kitchen and concluded I was the cook. For me what counts and stirred me was to see that these two or three barely clad lads, could ask themselves questions about religious outsiders being there in a chaos that was not of their making, instead of going back home to wait for better days. These fellows were probably not at the parish for the first time and were possibly part of the raiding party on the 10th. August, 2002. I think I am not mistaken by their amazement at the serenity

Picture above: Cooking outside at Lwenzya

and politeness (it does not often happen) of the questioning. So I can say, "I am not cut out to be a martyr or for some kind of heroics. If I were to die from a gunshot, it would be because I could not dodge it. Nonetheless if my presence, no matter how poor or insignificant, can be a source of support and hope even for one person, I pray the Lord for the grace to be able to stay on, confident that his grace is sufficient for me."

#### WHAT A BUZZ WHEN WE HEARD A MESSAGE

Silence! After the looting of our personal and community belongings by the **Mai-Mai** fighters, the silence around us fell heavily and threateningly. We lived in fact in a boxed-in zone with no communication to the outside (Diocese, Province, etc.). The one and only means of communication we had used with the outside was the radiophone which was at fixed times. This had also been stolen. I felt as if I were at the bottom of an abyss, curled up into myself. It was as if no one was interested in our fate, abandoned by God and men. In the end we began to get some news from the Diocese and the Province by connecting the phone wavebands to the sole radio that had escaped the notice of the pillagers. What a buzz when we heard a message for us! Even without being able to reply, this call gave me a new lease of life and told me, "They are one with us." In this perspective the two visits we received from the Provincial team helped me to grasp better that mission is neither lived nor done alone. Somewhere along the line, I need to be supported, confirmed and affirmed by my Superiors; and also to be connected to the world around, principally the Local Church that received me. The way I am feeling now sometimes makes me question the mediocrity and indifference on the side of the Local Church at what I am living in my current mission. What can I really do in a Church where the members, just like I do, feel abandoned to their fate in insecurity and without support from those in charge?

#### THE MISSION OF CHRIST SUFFERING IN SILENCE

To be honest, my personal spirituality is not rooted in the Psalms of the breviary, especially since I have no chance to stop and reflect on them while I pray. To me they seemed violent and a bit pagan, even if I had begun to personalise them during the Noviciate. The times of conflict we have been living in for ages taught me to rediscover the Psalms as deep prayer. The Psalms for the King in time of War, and for the survivors and deportees of Israel, give vent not only to the indignation of the Psalmist, but also his unshakeable confidence in God. For me, they have taken on a human and true-life aspect. The indignation of the Psalmist confronted with massacres and inhuman treatment is no longer remote prayer, but a lived reality. At the same time, I am realising that Christian prayer is not an information service to God, nor a reproduction of other people's words, but rather to lay claim to one's own burden and that of the world and direct it to Christ. It is a time to understand that God is not the author of our evils, but that he is engaged in our humanity which itself is engaged in the events of life. Never have I felt the Lord so close or so distant.

#### THE LORD, SO CLOSE, SO DISTANT

Distant, in the sense that when I am just about to think that we are moving towards a cessation in hostilities, a new battle starts up on the horizon. Then I feel abandoned just like the Son on the Cross, by a distant and silent God. How can God remain silent in the face of years of suffering by the innocent?

Near, because even without great understanding or very clear-sightedness with merely human wisdom, somewhere inside me I feel that God is the sole Master of History. He continues to intervene in our personal and community history, as the Plan of Salvation earlier revealed. One time I was walking out after an attack, feeling nothing but the beating of my heart and the breeze.

In spite of fear and anguish engulfing me, I seemed to hear Christ remind me what he said to his Apostles on the evening of their sending out on mission: "And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time" (Mt 28:20). Then the will to live and the desire to remain right where I am came rushing back to me.

#### WHAT STRENGTHENS ME

For all that, I am neither a mystic nor a man of exceptional piety. My times of prayer since the beginning, or at least the resumption of hostilities, consist in casting at the foot of the Cross the pain and the hope for others and myself. Whether it is in the chapel, in my room, in the open or on my motorbike, prayer has become for me an internal attitude which consists in offering my life and that of others, such as it is, to Christ. This means my fits of anger, my feelings of rebellion, my inner turmoil, the glimmer of hope, and the people raped, tortured and pillaged (who are people close to me, not distant and anonymous). I do not know if this form of prayer is valid according to Spiritual Theology, but at my personal level, it is what strengthens me and gives me the will to continue to be a White Father in the Congo. Without that, I would have packed up long ago and gone elsewhere; or I would be constantly sad and miserable and in the end depressed.

#### BEARING WITNESS IN THE MIDST OF COMMUNITY

'Being together in Faith' is a demonstration of the presence of God especially in time of war. In the **Petit Echo** and the White Fathers' **Capitular Documents** I often see that **witnessing communities**, to which we aspire as a group of



people gathered together in Christ, transcend their differences (of all kinds) to make obvious the universal love of Christ for all peoples. For this to happen, the community draws up a plan to help it. I discovered all this in the community that received me. Only, what I am now discovering is that the community plan, without being unimportant, can eliminate Providence from our Mission. My community does not have a community plan in the strict meaning of the term - see the previous article. We depend on Providence.

#### COFFEE BREAK TOGETHER

Who knows what tomorrow will bring? Mission in community for us is in mutual support by listening to one another, by finding time to have a coffee break together, by having recreation in spite of everything and relive the vicious blows taken individually or as a community. In the midst of chaos, the foregoing helps me to put things into perspective and keep a sense of humour.

At the opposite extreme of our days of peace when everyone is taken up with apostolate, this sombre period gives me the opportunity to see the members of my community in a different light and to better appreciate their presence. This is especially true after an absence, however short it may be. Thus I understand and can better grasp

Picture above: Young hopefuls on home made instruments

that the other person is not to be devoured at any price like food, in order to appreciate him better. The other person is an alter ego to move towards, to receive into my life as a first gift of mission, in order to place a value on the effects of his presence. In point of fact, it is as if in these times of crisis, the Lord never ceased to remind me through other members of community that I was not alone in 'this murderous madness'.

#### OUR PLANS? TOMORROW IS UNFORESEEABLE

At this time of redirecting the Society when one speaks of so many community plans, ours consists of seeing in even the most painful event the living and loving face of God. Our community discernment is determined by the daily hazards: tomorrow is unforeseeable. That reduces my stress level. If I were attached to a highly developed plan, it would make my life and that of the community unworkable, because we would always be bound by the plan. Indeed, even a hospitality plan is impossible. Visitors come one after the other and are so different from one another. From one day to the next, we may have to deal with a different group of

fighters. In all this, I feel that if we are still here as a community, it is because each member considers the other as a brother and a friend. In my view that is very important in general, but even more so when the territory to which we are sent is going through such a major upheaval.

#### POWERLESS BUT COMPASSIONATE PRESENCE

In no way have I sought to idealise or sanctify what I live here in **Kipaka**. I only wanted to share on a personal level. Neither am I claiming that what I live is great or is the missionary ideal. All I know is that if I had not been there, it would have been quite different for my community, the people and me. In fact, is not mission to be in the right place at the right time because the Lord sent us? My mission here at Maniema in **Kipaka** is a daily offering of prayer for colleagues, my parishioners and me. It is the sharing of my meagre resources with the people who have been impoverished beyond the limit of poverty. Mission is my powerless but compassionate presence at their side and the achievable defence of their rights.

of Laurent-Désiré Kabila (1996-1997). Kabila led rebel groups, including the Banyamulenge, and overcame the Zairean army, and entered Kinshasa on 17 May, 1997, where he declared himself President. Relations between Kabila, and Rwanda and Uganda began to deteriorate. In July, 1998, all foreign troops were given a week to leave the country. The Kabila regime was then challenged by a Rwanda and Uganda-backed rebellion in August. The rebels seized major towns in the east and Kabila asked for help from Angola, Chad, Namibia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe who intervened in his support.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) held a series of summits, chaired by President Chiluba of Zambia, that led to a settlement. On 10 July, 1999, Angola, **DRC**, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and rebel groups signed a cease-fire. In the '**Lusaka Agreement**' a framework was agreed which laid the foundations for elections and a new constitution. This did not stop the conflict and fighting continued. In September, 1999, the United Nations Observer Mission to Congo (**MONUC**) was deployed to verify and monitor the disengagement of forces under the '**Lusaka Agreement**'.

On 16 January, 2001, Laurent Kabila was assassinated and his son Joseph Kabila became head of state on 26 January, 2001. Since taking power Joseph Kabila has attempted to implement the '**Lusaka Agreement**' and to improve his country's situation. In July, 2002, the Governments of the **DRC** and Rwanda signed the '**Pretoria Agreement**'. This provided for the withdrawal of the Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) from **DRC** territory, in return for the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Repatriation, Resettlement and Reintegration (**DDRRR**) combatants of the



Picture above: A group of young people reflecting during Lent, at Kifungo

**ex-FAR/Interahamwe**. The RDF withdrew in October, 2002, and two months later Joseph Kabila was successful in getting the other warring parties to sign an agreement to stop fighting and set up a government of national unity.

#### REBEL AND MILITIA GROUPS INVOLVED

There are many 'Rebel/Militia Groups' in the **DRC**. The majority are active in northern and eastern **DRC**. **MONUC** is gradually accepting the surrender of fighters and they are being integrated into the country's existing structures and civilian life; they are helping other combatants to be repatriated under the **DDRRR** agreement. By the end of 2003 **MONUC** had assisted in the repatriation of 3,100 former Rwandan combatants. Some of the main groups are listed below.

**ALLIED DEMOCRATIC FORCES (ADF)**: a Ugandan movement that has fought the Uganda government from their bases in North Kivu, **DRC**. They first gained prominence in November 1996 and make regular attacks in the Bundibugyo, Kasese, and Kabarole Districts. The ADF is made up of of Tabliq Muslim extremists, rebels from the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda, and soldiers from the former government forces of Rwanda and **DRC**. The ADF is led by Jamil Makulu.

## Background Notes on the D.R. Congo

Compiled by Fr. Bill Turnbull W.F. \*

#### INTERNAL - INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

The conflict in the Great Lakes region - involving various ethnic groups (Tutsi, Hutu, Lendu, Hema, and others), rebel groups, armed gangs - has drawn in the government forces of surrounding countries. It is a similar situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (**DRC**) with Uganda and Rwanda supporting the rebel groups that still occupy much of the east of the country. The heads of the Great Lakes states have pledged to end conflict, but the violence continues despite UN peacekeeping efforts.

In 1994 there was a huge influx of refugees into eastern **DRC** from fighting in Burundi and after the genocide in Rwanda. President Mobutu gave sanctuary to the Rwandan Hutu refugees, including the **Interahamwe** militias, and the former Rwandan Government Army (**ex-FAR**) - the latter were given state support to carry out attacks into Rwanda. This aggravated the ethnic tensions with Banyamulenge (Congolese Tutsi) and was the catalyst to begin the 'ethnic'.

In October, 1996, Rwanda and Uganda launched the Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation (AFDL), against Mobutu under the leadership

\* Taken from the SuttonLink fact sheet series. A fuller version is on the [White Fathers UK Web Site at www.thewhitefathers.org.uk/za\\_fct.html](http://www.thewhitefathers.org.uk/za_fct.html)

**CONGOLESE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY (RCD):** launched in August 1998. Former Mobutu generals joined opposition forces against Kabila to form the RCD. The RCD's aim was to overthrow Laurent Kabila. It is believed to have been backed by troops from Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. Since its foundation it has split into six factions.

**CONGOLESE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY-GOMA (RCD-Goma):** a faction of the RCD based in Goma. It estimated to have 17,000-20,000 fighters, commanded by disaffected Congolese officers and is backed by Rwanda.

**CONGOLESE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY-KISANGANI (RCD-Kisangani):** a faction of the RCD formerly based in Kisangani. Followed Wamba dia Wamba when he split from the RCD-Goma in March 1999. On the verge of disappearing.

**CONGOLESE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY-KISANGANI-LIBERATION MOVEMENT (RCD-K-ML):** is a Ugandan-backed offshoot of RCD-Goma formed by Ernest Wamba dia Wamba when he left the RCD. The situation of RCD-K-ML is complicated by power struggles. It has about 2,500 fighters.

**CONGOLESE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY-NATIONAL (RCD-N):** emerged in 2002. It is led by Roger Lumbala and backed by Uganda and the MLC. RCD-N and MLC were accused of cannibalism by Mgr. Melchisedec Sikulu Paluku, Bishop of Beni-Butembo Diocese in northeastern DRC and a judicial inquiry into massacres, and cannibalism alleged to have been carried out by them, in Orientale Province, was launched.

**CONGOLESE ALLIANCE FOR DEMOCRACY-ORIGINAL (RCD-O):** emerged in 2002. It is led by Felix Mumbere and backed by Uganda.

**FORCE FOR THE DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACY (FDD):** Burundian rebels who supported Kabila. Their forces are split between the DRC and Tanzanian refugee camps. 16,000 combatants.

**MAI-MAI (Mayi-Mayi):** warriors are indigenous to North and South Kivu - see page 8.

**MOVEMENT FOR THE LIBERATION OF CONGO (MLC):** founded in Equateur Province in November, 1998. Is led by Jean-Pierre Bemba and backed by Uganda with between 6,500-9,000 fighters.

**RWANDAN LIBERATION ARMY (AliR):** an umbrella title for the **ex-FAR**, **Interahamwe** and Hutu recruits gained since 1994. After the Rwandan genocide the **Interahamwe/ex-FAR** fled to Goma, Rutshuru and Masisi in North Kivu, DRC. They retain bases in the Masisi and carry out cross border raids. It is claimed that they were trained by Laurent Kabila and Zimbabwe. They are believed to have a training camp near Bibwe, that attracts recruits from Rwanda, and Rwandan refugees in Congo-Brazzaville, Tanzania, Uganda, and the CAR. The **Interahamwe/ex-FAR** have destabilised the eastern DRC and engage local ethnic groups and the Mai-Mai on an anti-Tutsi theme. Over 16,000 **ex-FAR**, who remained in Rwanda, or returned since 1994, have been reintegrated into the Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF), or demobilised. **MONUC** estimates that 12-15,000 **ex-FAR/Interahamwe** remain in DRC (Nov. 2003).

**UNION OF CONGOLESE PATRIOTS-RECONCILIATION AND PEACE (UPC-RP):** emerged in the Ituri Region in 2002. It is Hema-dominated, led by Tomas Lubanga and supported by Uganda and Rwanda. The UPC is based in Bunia though it has been fought over with the UPDF.

#### NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES INVOLVED

**ANGOLA:** In 1997, after Mobutu fell, Angolan troops went into southern DRC to attack UNITA bases. Angola had 2,000-2,500 soldiers in DRC.

**BURUNDI:** had soldiers in the DRC to fight its own Hutu rebels who were at war since 1983. The situation worsened when the Burundi government pushed 300,000 people into 'regroupment camps', and refugees into DRC and Tanzania. Burundi had about 2,000 soldiers involved.

**NAMIBIA:** became involved in mid-1998, in support of Angola, and in December 1998 allowed

Angolans to fight from Namibia. 1,600-2,000 Namibia soldiers were involved.

**RWANDA:** the main problem began in 1994 when hundreds of thousands of Hutu fled into DRC after the genocide. The extremists then began attacking Rwanda from DRC. The Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) troops were sent to curb the militia and were supported by Uganda who joined them to suppress its own rebels in the DRC. In 1996 Rwanda and Uganda attempted to end the attacks by supporting Laurent Kabila. Once Kabila came to power he distanced himself from Rwanda and they accused him of supporting the Hutu fighters. In August, 1998, Rwanda and Uganda began to support the RDC, and other groups, to rebel. The RDF troops withdrew from the DRC in October, 2002. It is believed that Uganda had been 17,000-25,000 soldiers in the DRC.

**SUDAN:** has reportedly helped Laurent Kabila on occasions, such as the bombing of towns in rebel zones in northern DRC in 1999.

**TANZANIA:** it's involvement has been mainly as a haven for the hundreds of thousands of Hutu who have fled from Burundi, Rwanda and the DRC since 1994.

**UGANDA:** has been accused of having 8,000-10,000 soldiers in DRC, who were involved in taking diamonds, gold, timber and ivory out of the country. Uganda has backed the MLC and the RCD. The Ugandan army agreed to withdraw from the DRC by 24 April, 2003.

**ZAMBIA:** former Presidents Kaunda and Chiluba have been peace brokers in the region since the independence struggles to the peace deals in Angola and the DRC.

**ZIMBABWE:** it is estimated that President Mugabe sent 7,000-11,000 troops to the DRC to support Laurent Kabila. It is said that Mugabe's motive



was to be a major player in Southern Africa and to gain access to the DRC's mineral wealth. The military involvement was unpopular at home and its costs were concealed from donors and the IMF.

#### RESULTS OF THE CONFLICT

**PEOPLE:** the International Rescue Committee (IRC) reported (8 April, 2003) that conflict in the DRC has cost more lives than any other since World War II. The IRC estimates that between August 1998 and November 2002 at least 3.3 million people have died. Most deaths are due to treatable diseases and malnutrition, and are often linked to displacement and the collapse of the health services and economy. Hundreds of thousands have been uprooted and now are both internally displaced people (1.8 million IDPs, 2003 est.) and refugees (300,000, 2003 est.) in neighbouring countries.

**WILDLIFE:** has been poached from the game reserves for food. A WWF census (28 August, 2003) found a 95% decline in the hippopotamus population in Virunga National Park, on the eastern border of the DRC.

**ECONOMY:** all the militia groups and countries that have been involved have plundered the DRC's mineral wealth.

Picture above: A view of Lake Tanganyika taken at Moba

# The Democratic Republic of Congo



**COUNTRY:** Congo (Zaire)

**OFFICIAL NAME:** Democratic Republic of Congo (Republique Democratique du Congo)

**FORMER NAME:** Congo Free State, Belgian Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo Leopoldville, Congo Kinshasa, Zaire (area populated 10,000 years ago; settled by Bantus from present-day Nigeria in 7th and 8th centuries AD; Portuguese explorers [Diego Cao] in 1482;

Henry Morton Stanley later; officially colonized [personal possession of Belgian King Leopold II] as Congo Free State in 1885; Belgian Government administration [renamed the Belgian Congo] took over in 1907; granted independence on 30 June 1960; Parliamentary elections [Patrice Lumumba became Prime Minister and Joseph Kasavubu President], renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1960.)

**CAPITAL:** Kinshasa

**MAIN TOWNS:** Kinshasa, Kisangani, Lubumbashi

**SUBDIVISIONS:** 10 provinces: Bandundu, Bas-Congo, Equateur, Kasai-Occidental, Kasai-Oriental, Katanga, Maniema, Nord-Kivu, Orientale, Sud-Kivu. 1 city: Kinshasa.

**INDEPENDENCE:** 30 June 1960 (from Belgium)

**NATIONAL HOLIDAY:** Independence Day, 30 June.

**ETHNIC GROUPS:** More than 200 groups the majority are Bantu. 4 largest are Luba, Kongo, Mongo (Bantu), & the Mangbetu-Azande (Hamitic). Others include the Bwaka, Kwangu-Kwilu, Lunda, Tshokwe, Lulua, Ngala, Songe & Zande.

**LANGUAGES:** French (official), Lingala (a trade lingua franca), Kingwana (a Swahili dialect), Kikongo, Tshiluba

**RELIGIONS:** Roman Catholic 50%, Protestant 20%, Kimbanguist 10%, Muslim 10%, other sects and Traditional beliefs 10%

**Note:** 'Kivu has deposits of precious minerals used in leading-edge industries (electronics, aeronautics, nuclear medicine). These include niobium (15% of the world's reserves are to be found in Africa, 80% of these in the Congo) and tantalum, associated with columbium and known locally as 'coltan' (Africa has 80% of the world reserves, of which 80% in the Congo).' ('Carve-up in the Congo' by Colette Braeckman, Le Monde diplomatique, Oct. 1999) 'The Congo's Centre for the Evaluation of Precious Stones reported the export of 27.1 million carats valued at US\$642.74 million, in 2003.' ('DRC: Thousands of illegal diamond miners expelled', IRIN, 30 Jan. 2004.)

**OIL AND NATURAL GAS:** Oil production: 24,000 bbl/day (2001 est.) consumption: 14,000 bbl/day (2001 est.) proved reserves: 1.538 billion bbl (January 2002 est.) Natural gas - proved reserves: 104.8 billion cu m (January 2002 est.)

Pipelines: petroleum products 390 km

**ECONOMIC AID RECEIVED:** US\$195.3 million (1995)

**DEBT:** US\$10bn (1994), US\$13bn (1998 est.), US\$12.9 billion (2000 est.)

**MAJOR IMPORTS:** foodstuffs, mining and other machinery, transport equipment, fuels

**IMPORTS FROM:** South Africa 18.2%, Belgium 16.4%, Nigeria 11.8%, France 5.9%, Kenya, China (2000)

**MAJOR EXPORTS:** diamonds, copper, crude oil, coffee, cobalt

**EXPORTS TO:** Belgium 59.7%, United States 12.9%, Zimbabwe 7.4%, France 6.9%, South Africa, Finland, Italy (2000)

## Natural Resources and Areas of Conflict in the D.R. Congo

