THE GOOD GUYS AND THE BAD GUYS

AND OTHER MYTHS

AN ANALYSIS OF LOS ANGELES TIMES COVERAGE OF THE SHABA "INVASION" 1978

by

Robert Cuddy

The American media (seem) to be more concerned, or more capable, of covering the bizarre and sensational... (they) often (overlook) the truly good stories, the truly important stories in Africa and about the peoples of Africa

Johnson Ndimbie
Cameroon, 1974

Black people in the more remote areas have a reputation for fearful savageness, stemming from a belief in voodoo. When under the influence of liquor or hemp, they are capable of gruesome atrocities...

Jack Foisie
Reporter
Los Angeles Time
1978

If you believe any or all of the following, then you were reading the Los Angeles Times last spring and summer, when Zaire was briefly in the news. The average non-Africanist reader of the Times, if asked to reconstruct the Shaba invasion based on no other source than the Times, would tell it pretty much the way I will in the next four paragraphs. If the more discerning reader or student of Africa finds this summary somehow offbase, even inaccurate, and that it leaves certain questions unanswered, he should. Because Times coverage was offbase, often inaccurate, and incomplete.

A Visit to Shaba

In May of 1978, the African country of Zaire was invaded by its neighbor to the south, Angola. The invaders were Lunda tribesmen who had once lived in Zaire. They had tried a similar invasion of Shaba province a year earlier, but had been repelled by Western forces coming to the aid of Zaire's pro-West government. The invaders were trained by Cubans and armed by Russians. The invasion was instigated by Russia and Cuba as part of an international conspiracy to extend communist hegemony in Africa. Both countries, especially Cuba, already had been instrumental in imposing Marxist dictatorships on several peace-loving African countries.

During the invasion, the tribesmen got drunk on liquor they looted from European-occupied houses in Shaba. This caused them to revert to their natural savagery and go on a killing, rape, and pillage spree, aimed at whites. The Zairian army, being African, was corrupt, undisciplined, and itself savage. Consequently, it was unable to stop the killing and looting, and, in fact, joined in. So disciplined white troops, mostly French, were flown in to restore order and oust the savages. The latter took about 60 hostages, some of whom they may have massacred, but fled back to Angola.

Zaire's economy crumbled because of all this and because Zaire's President, Mobutu Sese Seko, is corrupt and incompetent. Like most African leaders, he is incapable of running a country in a disciplined and civilized fashion. To save Zaire's economy, the West moved in with a firm hand and took it over after the Shaba invasion. This is just what Zaire needs to get it back on its feet financially, and, coupled with saving them from the Marxists, is the nicest thing anyone could do for the people of Zaire. White technicians in Shaba - where Zaire's copper is located - are now protected by a military force consisting of troops from Gabon, Senegal, and Morocco. The presence of genuinely African troops like these, instead of French soldiers, proves that France and the West aren't interested in any kind of colonial or neo-colonial intervention in Zaire.

To be sure, there is a growing French military presence in Africa, but this is only because someone in the West has to stop the Soviet-Cuban aggressors; the U.S. has abandoned its responsibilities there. There was some debate in the U.S. as to whether the Shaba invasion was in fact a Soviet-Cuban venture, but those who raised these questions were cynics like Senator George McGovern, or foreign sources who were inherently unreliable, like President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, or members of the Angolan or Cuban governments. Responsible persons like President Jimmy Carter, or Stansfield Turner, director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), said the Cubans were involved, and that was good enough for Congressional leaders like Speaker of the House Thomas P. O'Neill Jr. and Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker. Turner and Carter said they had proof, although they didn't show any of it to Congressional leaders and, of course, declined on grounds of national security to release any of it to the public. It is true that evidence which emerged elsewhere a month or so after the Shaba invasion made it necessary for Carter to "clarify" his stance on Cuba's involvement; in any event, Carter made clear, Cuba was morally culpable even if it wasn't militarily engaged in the Shaba invasion.

My purpose in this paper is to examine that summary and Times coverage of the Shaba episode. I will examine not just the content of Shaba stories during the weeks Zaire held the headlines, but also what was written between the lines in those stories. By contrasting Times reports and impressions with more knowledgeable sources, I hope to pinpoint weaknesses in Times coverage of Shaba and, by implication, of other African stories. Having isolated the weaknesses, I intend to dissect them like a frog in a laboratory, in an attempt to see how they came to be in the first place. This is a complex organism, but I think I will be able to show that the center of it, the part sending out impluses to the rest of it, is Eurocentrism, political and cultural. Finally, I hope to show the harm lurking in this biased coverage, and suggest improvements: how the U.S. media can build a better frog, as it were.

Some caveats: first this is an analysis of *Los Angeles Times* coverage of the Shaba invasion. It therefore cannot be taken as an indictment of American newspapers as a whole (nor does it reflect on other media). On the other hand, the Times is considered one of America's best newspapers, and is certainly the best and largest (circulation as of 12/13/78: 1,034,329 daily; 1,332,875 Sunday) west of Chicago. It is one of a handful with correspondents in Africa (two of them, David Lamb and Jack Foisie, were sent to Shaba during the life of this story). It has access to all the major wire services.

So it is reasonable to assume that, if the Times handled this story poorly, other papers handled it even less well.

Secondly, because of time limitations, I have not had a chance to interview Times reporters and deskmen and ask them why a particular story was written or not written, or what was edited, and why, or why one story was bannered across Page One, and another buried at the bottom of Page E-33. I have anticipated some of these answers by dealing with the general literature relating to problems of African coverage, and applying those concepts to this particular situation. In the context of Zaire, however, I hope to show that the traditional journalistic excuses for poor coverage are just that: excuses, masking a lack of initiative and curiosity.

The Conspiracy

Of the several themes which emerged in Times coverage of the Shaba difficulties, the one which arrived first and stayed the longest was the theme of an attempted communist takeover in Zaire. The thrust of this coverage, rooted in an ideological half-truth which will be discussed later, was that the Shaba invasion (which I will call Shaba II to distinguish it from the Shaba invasion of 1977, Shaba I) was an international act of aggression, launched from Angola against Zaire with the connivance of Cuba, which itself was acting as a "stooge" for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The purpose of the invasion was to extend communist hegemony in Africa by toppling the "pro-West" government of Zaire. Reporters taking this tack by implication and practice excluded or minimized other explanations for what went on in Shaba; especially explanations which might have found internal reasons for what happened.

In building this scenario, the Times made errors in emphasis, sources, and context. They eventually had to back down and modify the "communist invasion" emphasis, but by that time, the reading public already had tried Angola, Cuba and the Soviet Union in the Times news columns, and found them guilty. This cannot all be laid at the door of reporters in Africa. Times deskmen were equally guilty through placement, headlines, frequency of charges, infrequency of denials, inclusion of red-baiting editorials, and use of misleading columns by ignorant men like Joseph Kraft.

The first Times mention of Shaba II was a front page top story which screamed, *Rebels Invade Zaire; Cuban Forces Reported*.[1] The story, an amalgam created from several Times wire services, said the "attackers came from Angola...about 4000 rebels...backed by Libya and Algeria...Cuba and Russia... moved against Kolwezi." Meanwhile, "another rebel force...

including whites who have been identified as Cubans..." attacked Mutshasha.

In one three banked headline and two lively paragraphs, then, we have many of the Evil Gods in the Western pantheon attacking Zaire, soon to be identified (ceaselessly and tiresomely) as "pro-West." The theme was repeated incessantly. On May 20 Jack Foisie wrote, "Cuban and Soviet troops are believed to have provided arms and training."[2] A Times editorial called the Cubans "stooges" of the USSR.[3] Joseph Kraft, who parroted the Administration line throughout, wrote on May 23, "by offering Cuban military assistance to a liberation front fighting the Portuguese, the Russians gained a foothold in Angola. Now the Angolans, backed by Russia, threaten a pro-western regime in Zaire."[4] Norman Kempster quotes a U.S. official as saying there is "no convincing evidence" of Cuban involvement, but "I won't rule it out," since "Cubans are getting more brazen about these things."[5] Times reporter, John H. Averill, quoted Senate Majority Leader, Robert Byrd, as saying Cuba and Russia "armed and trained" the rebels.[6] On June 13, a month after the fighting in Shaba had begun, Defense Secretary, Harold Brown and CIA Director, Stansfield Turner said there were "35 cases of Cuban involvement" in Shaba II.[7]

There is little question of the impression the *Los Angeles Times* reader had from this barrage. Was he being bamboozled?

Angola, to take the lease powerful "invading" country first, is hardly in a position to engage in international adventures of the sort mentioned here. Its government, the *Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola* (MPLA), took power only after a devastating civil war two years ago, and has numerous problems, according to Gerald J. Bender. In *Foreign Policy*, Bender argued that Angola's MPLA government still has not consolidated its territory firmly, beleaguered on all sides by elements, including Zaire and South Africa, trying to overthrow it, and is plagued by factionalism within the party.[8] Is a government - any government - in these straits likely to launch an international invasion? As Bender argues, Angolan President, Agostinho Neto, far from urging attacks on Zaire, has "tried to explain to Angolans at public rallies why good relations should be established with their northern neighbor despite years of hostility."[9]

This is not to say that the MPLA would not be delighted to see the Mobutu regime toppled into the Zaire River, bounce through the Devil's Cauldron, and sink into the Atlantic. Its disappearance, as M. Crawford Young writes, is in these quarters "a consummation devoutly to be wished."[10] Nevertheless,

however desirable Mobutu's departure might be to Angola, Angola at this time "needed peace to reconstruct itself; it needed to improve its relations with its neighbors."[11] As for the rebels, who call themselves the *National Front for the Liberation of the Congo* (FNLC), they had indeed been allied with the MPLA in the fight against the Portuguese, but now were more of a "nuisance" than anything else to Angola.[12] The MPLA might like to be rid of them, but not to the extent of getting into a war with Zaire.

This brings us to Cuba, which certainly could, with Soviet arms, back such adventurism. Or so the Times thinks. But could it? Would it? Did it? Not according to Jorge Dominguez, who asserts, "the Cuban government, in fact, has been troubled by the actions of the Shaba rebels in Angola." Dominguez explains that

> *The first invasion of Shaba increased Angola's vulnerability and led to the need for a reinforcement of Cuban troops in Angola. Cuba's principal stake in Angola - for the sake of the Luanda government as well as for the sake of protecting Cuban troops from unnecessary combat or casualties - has been to consolidate the Neto regime and reduce its vulnerability. That means avoiding war with Zaire as much as possible.*[13]

In other words, Cuba, already heavily involved overseas, is in danger of overextending itself. It will get in more deeply only if it is in its best interests to do so, that is, if involvement is "rational", in Cuba's definition of the word. It finally came out, even in the *Los Angeles Times*, that Castro had tried to stop Shaba II. But that information, which the Carter Administration possessed all along, was dribbled to the press late and in far too small a quantity to overcome the impression that Cuba instigated the invasion, so called, of Shaba.[14]

But even if Cuba did not want to invade Shaba with the Lunda tribesmen, they would have to if Russia told them to. After all, Cuba is nothing more than a Russian stooge, right? Editorial cartoonists employed by the Times know this beyond doubt, as exemplified by their frequent cartoons showing White Hunter Leonid Brezhnev leading his hunting dog, Fidel Castro, through the jungles of Africa.[15]

Dominguez is not so sure that Cuba is a Russian puppet. "Throughout these events (in Africa)," he writes, "Cuba has continued to coordinate policy with the USSR in ways that make it difficult to determine who leads and who follows, even-

though it remains clear that neither the Angolan nor the Ethiopian operations could have been conducted in the absence of either."[16] Thus, although these two powers might have mutual interests, they also have opposing interests, and, as Dominguez argues, Cuba will go along with Russia only when it is in its own interest to do so. As he puts it, "Cuba does not answer every call from every quarter."[17] It follows that if Cuba finds a Shaba invasion troublesome, it is not about to undertake it at Russian urging, even assuming that urging was forthcoming.

If Angola and Cuba were not pivotal in Shaba II, and Cuba is not a Soviet stooge, then how come nobody brought these points up, and why was the reading public left with the opposite impression? These points *were* brought up in the *Los Angeles Times*, but perfunctorily, as though the editor who included them threw them in not because he wanted to, but because he had to, so nobody could accuse him of not being "objective". There seemed to be an unstated assumption that the mere inclusion of both sides satisfied the demands of objectivity; no attention was paid to emphasis. Thus Cuba and Russia got their denials, all right, but they were whispered in the dark corners and hidden nooks of the news columns, while the false accusations by Carter, Turner and the rest were screamed daily on the front page so that no one could ignore them.

The Times reported various denials of Cuban and Russian and Angolan involvement in Shaba II right from the start, but, as mentioned, it always buried them. On May 16, in a story about Mobutu's troops, a Russian denial was buried low in the story.[18] Castro denied Cuban involvement May 17, but it was not reported until May 20, in the story which featured a Jody Powell charge that Cubans trained and equipped Katangans.[19] In early June, perfunctory attention was paid to Angolan President Neto, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, and Andrew Young, the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., all of whom deviated to one degree or another from the Administration line.[20] But the coverage given their words was too little and too late.

Some U.S. Senators smelled a rat, and were heard from occasionally. Senator George McGovern wanted information from the Administration on May 27,[21] and demanded proof of Administration allegations June 10.[22] Neither of these stories merited Page One treatment. Senator Dick Clark, the Senate's leading Africanist, said a few times he feared the Administration was using the Shaba fighting as an excuse to repeal the Clark Amendment and reinvolve the U.S. in fighting in Angola, which the Senate had halted in 1975.[23] He got a little ink with that charge, but not nearly as much as the Administration, and the Times soon dropped the subject. Meanwhile, Administration rebuttals to Clark and McGovern were reported, more pro-

fusely and more prominently. From time to time, Carter and his people would "brief" this or that leader who would emerge "convinced" of U.S. charges about Cuba and Russia. Here are reactions to a June 3 verbal briefing by Carter and CIA Director Turner. House Minority Leader John Rhodes, said that a "*prima facie* case has been proved" of Cuban involvement in Shaba II; Speaker O'Neill found the Turner-Carter sources "reputable and credible"; Senate Minority Leader Howard Baker said he was convinced "beyond a shadow of a doubt" of Cuban involvement.[24]

The misinformation handed to its readers by the Times here stems from a false emphasis, giving the Administration more play than those who questioned the Administration. What is more important is *why* the Times made this judgement, why Carter is considered more truthful than Nyerere, why Byrd is deemed more newsworthy and responsible than McGovern or Neto. This crucial question will be probed later.

The Times, though it looked bad on this aspect of the story, must be praised for putting reporter Oswald Johnston in Washington, and using dispatches from Cuba written by Washington Post reporter Karen deYoung. Johnston, whose reporting on then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger when Kissinger was trying to get the U.S. militarily involved in Angola was exemplary, finally unraveled the the "Cuban involvement" story (along with deYoung) in a way that everyone could understand. It turned out that Cuba had indeed trained the FNLC - when the FNLC was on the side of the Cubans and the MPLA during the Angolan Civil War several years ago. The training had not been for Shaba II; as we have seen, Cuba tried to stop Shaba II. But Press Secretary Powell told a State Department spokesman to tell the media that the training was "recent", and left the impression that Shaba II was instigated by Cuba.[25] According to deYoung, the Carter Administration knew from the start that Cuba opposed Shaba II, having been informed of this by Lyle Lane, U.S. Interests Section Chief in Havana.[26] Castro had laid his position out to Lane, who had relayed it to the Administration, which had chosen to hold it back and instead play upon the American public's fear of Cuba.

The media, in other words, were had by Washington. Of course, it was the media, in the form of reporters like deYoung and Johnston, who finally set things straight. But the impression is inescapable that these two are the exceptions; eliminate them and the handful like them and you have a press that is *de facto* controlled, not formally but informally.

We will leave the final word on this "conspiracy" hypothesis to Times reporter, David Lamb, who wrote an article in August entitled, "Intelligence About Cuba's Role in Zaire

Wasn't."[27] In it, he says that much of the Administration's information, which Byrd and others found so reliable, came from "sources of questionable reliability," including Mobutu and the *National Union for the Total Independence of Angola* (UNITA), a rebel force the U.S. backed in the Angolan Civil War. UNITA did not grasp political power in Angola, continues to fight the Angolan government (with the support of South Africa), and, as Lamb asserts, is "hardly an impartial observer of Cuba's role in Angola."

We have seen that the *Los Angeles Times* slanted this story by its manipulation of domestic news sources. The problem was magnified when dealing with sources in Africa. Sources for news stories which came from Africa were nearly always questionable, yet the Times blandly repeated what the U.S. Embassy, the French Defense Ministry, the Belgian Foreign Ministry, and President Mobutu Sese Seko told them, with very little evident effort to get at the truth concealed by the self-serving statements of these individuals and organizations.

This began with the first story about Shaba II, where "Cuban forces were reported." AZAP, the official Zairian government press agency, the Voice of Mobutu, reported the Cubans' presence.

Mobutu Sese Seko is given credit in many circles for a lot of things, especially the art of survival. One way he's managed to survive is to play on Western fears of communist penetration in Africa. Mobutu knows very well that he can send spasms through Western diplomats by sneaking up on them and whispering "Cuba" in their ear. This is what Bender suggests he did during Shaba II: "Following his instincts, and playing up to American fears, (Mobutu) accused the Cubans in Angola of joining the invaders."[28]

Mobutu, however, should not have been able to get a spasmodic reaction from the American press. Because, however much credit he is given for survival ability, few credit him with veracity. His lies in the past have bordered on the ludicrous, and even beyond. For example, in 1975 he alleged that the CIA and his own Force Publique were plotting his overthrow. Rene LeMarchand charitably calls this "patently fabulous", and suggests it was concocted in part to distract attention from Mobutu's heavy reliance on the CIA, a reliance which has been apparent, LeMarchand says, from 1964.[29]

This is not to say that Mobutu, or the French Defense Ministry, or the U.S. Embassy, should not be used as sources. Of course they should. The problem, however, is that reporters in Africa took these sources uncritically without going beyond and seeking information from local or non-Western sources.

It is likely that the factors at work here are those described by Ulf Himmelstrand. "In the absence of...understanding (an event like Shaba II), non-African journalists in Africa easily become victims of all kinds of popular interpretations derived from the people with whom they fraternize in hotels, bars and private homes."[30] These are likely to be English-speaking Europeans, or perhaps French-speaking ones, in the Zairian context.

Because they fraternized mostly with Europeans, reporters failed to tell the African side of the Shaba story. Was it really impossible to go down to the *marché* and ask some questions, or to talk to African professionals or bureaucrats, or even the maid or chauffeur at the Kinshasa Hilton? Or is this type of source considered irrelevant to Western reporters? Perhaps they think that only leaders have any information worth knowing. Maureen Johnson of the Associated Press did not think so when she filed a report on the Rhodesian internal settlement last fall. She talked to average black Rhodesians and found out just what effect the internal settlement will have on their lives, and what it means to them: none and nothing.[31] Her information that the settlement was designed to aid only those blacks at the top of the social stratum lent a startling and vivid new dimension to the Rhodesian story; this is because the information had been blockaded by reporters who talked only to Ian Smith or Joshua Nkomo, and ignored the people in the middle. There is a nasty undercurrent in nearly all Western news coverage from Africa of non-contact with Africans; it was glaring in coverage of Shaba II. Himmelstrand cautions that "the popular views of Africans are not necessarily more enlightened than those of expatriates."[32] Enlightened or not, they certainly should be sought out.

Not only were individual Africans not ferreted out as sources, but other African sources like newspapers and radio stations also were bypassed. Is Radio Angola automatically non-credible because the government there calls itself Marxist? Shouldn't it be monitored and reported so the *Los Angeles Times* reader can know what the Angolans are thinking, or at least saying? What about Zambian and Kenyan and Tanzanian newspapers? What did they say about the happenings in Zaire, and why wasn't that reported as a counter to Western sources? Because the West is more credible *per se*? France, which was given automatic credibility by American newspapers, has a million-dollar axe to grind in Zaire. There is a one-sidedness in American perspectives about who to believe and who to automatically discredit that leaves the nostrils quivering with the faint but acrid smell of racism.

The point here is not to savage the press and the *Los Angeles Times*; it is to suggest that they bring in more

sources to their analysis of what is going on in a given area - in Zaire, more African input, more journal articles, radio and newspapers. The real weakness of having limited information and sources is not only that you give misleading information; it also keeps you from digging deeper, asking really pertinent questions, and getting at the truth, insofar as it is possible.

For example, accepting the "Cuban invasion" thesis kept reporters from asking just who these "invaders" were, and what their angle was. The questions were raised perfunctorily in the Times, of course, but, like most important questions, got very short shrift indeed. By devoting hundreds of column inches to the question of Cuban involvement, the Times had less space to devote to analyzing the make-up of the "invaders".

The rebels usually were identified as Lunda tribesmen, with little further elaboration, as though that explained everything. The first Times story said they were remnants of a Katanga (the former name of Shaba Province) militia formed 15 years earlier when the United Nations "crushed" the Katangan secession.[33] The impression left was that they were really only a catspaw for the Russian-Cuban coalition, and that they might have had an interest in secession, since Shaba is "mineral-rich." If this sounds vague, that is because none of this was spelled out in detail. The salient characteristic about Times coverage of the "invaders" is not so much that wrong information was presented, but that very little explanatory information at all was given.

Well, who are these guys then? Connor Cruise O'Brien, in his book about the 1961 Katanga crisis, writes about the origins of the 1978 "invading force." They were then called the Katanguese gendarmerie and were "a European-officered force defending European property and interests"...who committed "atrocities and terror"...against the local population under the guise of "pacification."[34] A strange beginning for a group of men who in 1978 were allegedly struggling to grab Zaire for the communists.

Bender points out that the FNLC soldiers "have fought for no fewer than five causes in the last 16 years."[35] *Southern Africa* magazine hints the group had local roots and support. "The attack simply cannot be called an invasion," they write. "If the attack was an invasion, (nobody) has been able to explain how 4000 troops managed to cross the border from Angola, then from Zambia, and slip into Kolwezi overnight without being noticed."[36] *Southern Africa* also points out that "all the members aren't old enough to date from 1964. Many have fled Mobutu more recently."[37] Further, "the rebels... enjoyed strong support from the local population as a result of

the brutality, terror, and corruption of the Zairian Army since the first rebellion over a year ago," *Southern Africa* claims.[38] The magazine goes on to discuss the poverty of the local Africans in the midst of Shaba's plenty.

The Katangan rebels, known as *Front for the National Liberation of the Congo* (FNLC), then, are not ideologues; they had fought for several different causes, and under different circumstances. They seem to enjoy some local support, in part because the locals are both brutalized by Mobutu's army, and mired in poverty despite the wealth they are producing in Shaba's mines.

The FNLC was at one time trained by Cuba and armed by Russia, but that involvement had died down by 1978. Angola wants to be rid of them, but doesn't like them mucking about with invasions of Zaire, because that might invite reprisals against Angola. On the other hand, Zaire had been making regular incursions into Angola for months, unreported in the African press, and turning loose the FNLC might put a stop to Zairian aggression.

They seem to be Lunda, but one observer heard different dialects spoken by the "invading" forces. Given the eclectic nature of their recruitment - not only Lunda fled Zaire's oppression - they might be more than an ethnic force. M. Crawford Young writes that, "broader regional alignments have become more salient (than ethnicity); this trend is reinforced by the remarkable pace of diffusion of the major linguae francae, especially Lingala and Swahili. In the urban centers, these are becoming first languages for the new generations."[39] So they appear to be more than a Lunda separatist movement. At this point, we really do not know who they are or what they are up to. But it seems safe to conclude, as Young has, that "both Shaba I and Shaba II appear primarily as initiatives of FNLC,"[40] and the premise that FNLC takes orders from Cuba or Angola should be dismissed as incorrect.

Clearly, more information is needed about FNLC. The *Los Angeles Times* could have told its readers, "we don't really know what the FNLC is all about, but here's some information we have been able to gather." Instead, the Times summarily dismissed them as Cuban-trained, Russian-armed tribal secessionists. It is a poor job of professional journalism.

Had the Times adjusted its scope to focus on just the Zaire-Angola angle of Shaba II, they would have found some revealing information, which they then could have passed on to their readers. For example, Bender and others point out that Zaire had been making incursions into Angola long before Shaba II. The Times mentioned from time to time that Neto was upset

with Mobutu because the latter backed the opposition during the Angolan Civil War. But the Times neglected to mention what has been going on since along the Zaire-Angola border. Bender writes that there have been continued and systematic incursions into Angola from Zaire long since the civil war "ended." Shortly before Shaba II, Angolan border villages were bombed by Mirage jets from Zaire.[41] There were other incursions as well; they were reported to the UN, and were no secret to anyone except readers of the *Los Angeles Times*. Furthermore, Mobutu remains friendly to, and gives sanctuary to, both Jonas Savimbi of UNITA and Holden Roberto of the *National Front for the Liberation of Angola* (FNLA), the two groups which fell before the MPLA during the Angolan Civil War. In addition, Mobutu has helped the *Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda* (FLEC), a group trying to wrest Cabinda from Angola. Cabinda, separated from the Angolan mainland, and contiguous to Zaire, is where the bulk of Angola's oil is located. Losing it would be to Angola like losing Shaba to Zaire.[42] Indeed, Bender argues that the continued presence of Cuban troops in Angola, which worries Mobutu so much, is directly attributable to the attempts by Zaire and others to "destabilize" Angola. Current attacks on Angola by Zaire were not mentioned at all in the Times, not even in the fine print. The portrayal by the Times of Zaire as "victim" was in this context extremely misleading.

Nor did the Times place Shaba II in a regional or Southern African perspective, although *Southern Africa* magazine writes that "the military events in Shaba could affect the future of the liberation struggle in the remainder of southern Africa."[43] Angola is bordered on the South by Namibia, soon (?) to be granted "independence" by South Africa. Both South Africa and Angola expect the other to use their common border to stir up trouble; in fact, this is already happening. In that context, with problems in the south, it is even less likely that Angola would "invade" Zaire. But Zaire and South Africa might have a common interest in toppling Angola's government. Seeing the Mobutu regime as "an instrument of imperialism,"[44] Angola believes that "Zaire has been involved in several real or imagined plots" against it.[45]

By reading between the lines of Times reportage, and consulting other sources, it begins to dawn on one that the Times might have missed a really big story lurking behind the facade of Shaba II: the continuing attempt to bring down the government of Angola, possibly with the connivance or active support of the United States. Early Times stories on Shaba II mentioned that Jimmy Carter was chafing at the restrictions placed on the President by the Clark Amendment, and aired Clark's fears about the U.S. reinvolving itself in Zaire and/or Angola. But then the story faded away.

The Times might have dropped this angle because it made Zaire and, by affiliation, the U.S., look like the aggressor. It is a hallowed tradition in America that the U.S., and countries affiliated with it are never aggressors - they act only in self-defense. This is why we no longer have a Secretary of War; he is now the Secretary of Defense.[46] Newspapers in the U.S., including the *Los Angeles Times*, have rarely if ever, gotten around this tradition, though they purport to be "free" and "independent" of government influences. The concept is so basic to American institutions that it is literally inconceivable to get past it; in this sense the control is indirect, and, in a sense, more insidious, because the controlled person, the journalist, does not realize he is controlled.

This is why there was no local or regional angle to Shaba II. The U.S. government viewed it as an East-West contest, and so did the press. Zaire invading Angola, or South Africa trying to overthrow the Angolan government are not news. We know, because these things happened and were not reported. Even a straight Angolan invasion of Zaire probably would not be very newsworthy. But an invasion of a "pro-West" country by forces once allied with Cubans and Russians! Now, that is *NEWS*! Stop the presses! Remake Page One!

This is not to say that you can ignore the East-West angle. Nobody can rationally argue that what happens in Africa does not happen in the world. Nor can the mucking about in Africa by world superpowers be denied. But, again, it is a question of emphasis. When the East-West angle blots out local and regional angles, it is just plain wrong from any responsible reporter's point of view. And when the news judgement of reporters and editors working for a press that is supposed to be the world's freest is a carbon copy of the government's news judgement, then I am left with an unpleasant buzzing in my ears, like the sound of a rattlesnake under the floorboards.

Much of this process is unconscious, and the only way for a reporter to guard against it is to continually examine and test his own assumptions. There have been many examples of editors or reporters using or not using stories because of a "feel" or sixth sense.[47] It is the duty of those people to try to conceptualize this vague and amorphous sixth-sense, to put some flesh on it. They are products of their environment, like anyone else, and reflect the concepts drummed into their heads all during their school years. For example, the notion that the U.S. is never the aggressor. A good reporter will try to identify and acknowledge his own unstated assumptions, woven into his perceptions like yarn in a sweater, and unravel them.

Some reporters and deskmen examine their assumptions; but most do not. The result is a perspective on African events in the U.S. press that refuses to recognize those events as having any basic African ingredients, except those ingredients which are stirred up by the East or West. In Shaba, the reader got only a partial taste of truth.

R.M., writing in the *New Republic*, sums it up:

> *Rebellions in Africa...are shaped by local irredenta that have little or nothing to do with ideologies or balances of power elsewhere. However legitimate General Mobutu's regime may claim to be in Shaba, however awful the Katangan reprisals against Africans as well as Europeans, there is no question that the raid began (and succeeded as far as it did) not only or even mainly as the frenzied escapade of exiles instigated by the Russians or Cubans, but rather as a genuine regional revolt with a popular base - if not in pro-Katangan nationalism, at least in the widespread discontent with Mobutu's petty family tyranny from Kinshasa. In any case, all this has a complex local history. Mobutu's post-independence manuevers against both Patrice Lumumba and Katanga's Moise Tshombe in 1960-61; the abortive Katangan revolt in 1962-63; the bloody Stanleyville uprising and paratroop rescue in 1964; the Mobutu coup in 1965; tightening dictatorship, discrimination, and exploitation by the central government in Shaba for the last decade; and the mounting unrest, including another armed invasion by the Katangans a year ago...*[48]

The Missionary in the Stewpot

A second major theme in *Los Angeles Times* coverage of the Zaire crisis is that of the theme of black savages massacring white innocents, and the subsequent rescue of whites by the French. If that sounds like a lurid combination of the *missionary in the stewpot and the cavalry to the rescue*, that is the way the Times presented it. The Times made several journalistic mistakes here, some of which we have discussed, some of which we have not.

The first inkling that an atrocity story was imminent came May 16, a day after the initial "Cuban invasion" story,

when the Times ran an article headlined, "Foreigners Held Captive by Rebel Forces in Zaire."[49] "Thousands of foreigners" were being held, and "several" were "reported killed"..."as rebel troops and natives rampaged through the areas where most of the expatriates lived, looting villas and bungalows." There was not attribution for any of this. At the bottom of the story, by way of background, it was reported that 3,000 foreigners lived in and around the town, including 100 Americans. Most of the latter were workers for the Morrison-Knudsen Company and their families, or missionaries. It apparently never occurred to reporters to ask why there were so many foreigners in Shaba, and whether that had any bearing on what was going on there. This curious tendency to toss away potentially important information was characteristic of Times coverage.

Times stories continued to be lurid, only more so. Various reports filtered in of Europeans killed and/or kidnaped, sometimes with attribution (diplomatic sources in Zambia; a missionary in Zaire phoning a radio station in Belgium),[50] sometimes without. The Times printed it all, no matter how far-fetched. Military rumblings in the West were reported, as well as the evacuation of Americans.

By May 18 it became apparent that some Europeans had indeed been killed, and the hysteria began to mount in the Times. Belgian Foreign Minister Henri Simonet called it a "hunt against all Europeans."[51] An unnamed French diplomat in Kinshasa described the FNLC as "hordes, men of an extremely low level, full of hate and savagery, who have fallen upon the expatriates." They were "peaceful" at first, but "after finding liquor in looted houses...they dropped this restraint to start hunting down Europeans."[52]

By May 21 the Times was gasping in a headline, "Rebels Went on Rape, Killing Spree."[53] This was a Page One story which alleged at the bottom that one girl had been raped by three Katangans. There was no attribution. A Jack Foisie story found the rebels "savage", especially after drinking.[54] Terms like "slaughter" and "massacre" began to turn up. By May 31 Foisie had investigated thoroughly enough to offer this explanation for the killings in Shaba: "Black people in the more remote areas have a reputation for fearful savageness, stemming from a belief in voodoo. When under the influence of liquor or hemp, they are capable of gruesome atrocities...The same applies to the invaders."[55] Jack Foisie is the Times correspondent in Johannesberg, one of a handful of reporters interpreting events in Africa for Americans. Mind you that these lines were not written in 1878, but in 1978.

Virtually nothing was written about African dead. The first mention of it came May 24 in a Foisie story;[56] it was

not in the headlines or toward the top of the story. The kindest thing you can say about reporters and editors who see more importance in white deaths than black deaths is that they have double standards. Africans are acutely aware of their relative unimportance when the bodies are counted: "The killings of the whites in Kolwezi hit the headlines in the West, but surprisingly very little or nothing was reported by them of innocent blacks in Namibia, South Africa and Rhodesia on orders of Smith."[57] By the time the story wound up in Zaire, they were counting black bodies with the whites, but it was perfunctory, obligatory, a body count with no sense of the humanity of the victims, who apparently did not suffer a "reign of terror" before they died.

Racism was not the only thing wrong with this "missionary in the stewpot" aspect of Shaba II coverage. There also were inconsistencies between the lurid headlines and the body of some of the stories. Editors emphasized the bizarre, failing to explore evidence in its own stories that things might be explained more reasonably, and that there might be Africans capable of non-savage behavior. Foisie, for example, reported May 21 that women "generally were not molested" by the FNLC.[58] For consistency sake, the least the Times desk should have done was banner "Rape Spree Denied" across Page One. No such luck, however. Again, Foisie wrote May 24 that the murders in Shaba "apparently were not random", but were directed against key mining personnel.[59] And UPI reported that the rebels were looking at passports in Kolwezi and were after the French, not the Belgians.[60] Another story actually found a FNLC leader expressing concern for the safety of some American hostages, and members of the Zaire army actually saving the Americans at the risk of their own skins, for heaven's sake.[61] In yet another story, Foisie said forty-four of the European deaths may have resulted, not from a FNLC massacre, but because the Zairian army used the Europeans as shields when fleeing the FNLC.[62] A Belgian official told Foisie another time that five Rhodesian whites and a Belgian white were killed by French paratroops.[63]

It is easy to see where all these stories are leading: to the conclusions that both the FNLC and the Zaire troops are human, not savages; that they might have showed restraint and courage at times; that the killings might have stemmed not from a "drunken spree" rooted in voodoo savagery, but for particular reasons in particular circumstances, and as a result of planning, not uncontrollable impulse; that not all the European dead were necessarily killed by the FNLC, or even by Africans.

The trouble with conclusions like these, implicit in stories which appeared on the Times' own news pages, is that

they get in the way of the other conclusion: that Africans all are savages and hate whites. As Himmelstrand says, some news persons "have become so convinced of the reality of their interpretation that dissonant pieces of information are rejected as coming from less reliable sources."[64] The only reasonable conclusion about the deaths in Shaba was put forth by *Southern Africa* magazine: it said that many people, African and European, are dead; but, "who killed whom and why are questions that have not yet been clearly answered."[65]

The Times handling of the hostage story is curious, not only because it shows a propensity by the Times desk to unquestioningly accept questionable information from tainted sources, but also because it highlights a persistent Times failure in its African coverage: leaving stories dangling.

The first mention of hostages came May 21, when 60 of them allegedly were carried off by the FNLC.[66] Two days later the figures "12 to 15" and "as many as 50" hostages appeared in the same news story.[67] No source was cited. Later, it was up to 70, taken by retreating rebels, and pursued by the French Foreign Legion, who were "racing against time." "We fear the worst," said a Western diplomat in Kinshasa.[68] Oddly, Angola offered to guarantee the safety of any hostages brought to Angola, one of several instances in which Angola was caught trying to be reasonable. But the Times was not ostentatious about this; Angola's offer was deeply buried in a story which emphasized something else. By June 1, 70 hostages were reported executed, and the source of the hostage stories emerged: Mobutu.[69] The FNLC, finally consulted, were given a paragraph or two at the bottom of that story to explain that the only hostages taken were not civilians, but six French army engineers who had been maintaining the Zairian army's armored cars. And that is the last we heard of the hostages.

The Times left hostages in limbo after its Angolan Civil War coverage, too.[70] And it left other stories dangling in Zaire. For example, it reported outbreaks of violence in Burnia, in northeastern Zaire, far from Shaba, then never got back to the story.[71] Further, the Times mentioned Mobutu's murders in Bandundu earlier in the year, but only in passing.[72] According to both Foisie and Crawford Young, this was a considerable bloodletting, yet the Times not only failed to write about it when it happened, but now that the focus was on Zaire continued to ignore it. The Times talked about a mysterious missile launching base in Kamina, 150 miles north of Kolwezi.[73] According to O'Brien, this is a gigantic complex,[74] and Bender writes that the Soviets, Angolans, and some journalists believe "the Germans, with the ...CIA, are testing cruise missiles and intermediate-range ballistic missiles" there, "in a 100,000

square-mile area of Shaba roughly the size of the state of Colorado."[75] Might this base be relevant to Shaba II? We'll not find out by reading the *Los Angeles Times*.

The Helping Hand

Following quickly in the path of the Times "massacre" coverage - riding behind it on a white horse, you might say - was its coverage of the Western military and economic "rescue" of Zaire. This was presented Eurocentrically, in a "good guys to the rescue" fashion, rather than as an outside intervention into African affairs, or a form of neo-colonialism, as Cuban and Soviet escapades in Africa usually are presented. However, the French military presence in Zaire and the rest of Africa was put in perspective thanks to a fine article by David Lamb, which the Times ran on Page One. This was one of the few stories which lent balance to the Times coverage of Africa in the East-West context.

The initial story about the Shaba difficulties mentioned toward the bottom that the French had been instrumental a year earlier in routing the FNLC. Increasing French military involvement in Zaire also was documented almost daily during Shaba II. Most of this coverage was implicitly approving. However, a few weeks after the first story, Lamb confronted the growing French involvement directly in a front-page story headed "France Plays Gendarme for the West in Africa."[76] In this piece Lamb detailed an alarmingly large French presence in Africa: six bases, military advisers in 11 countries, 15-18 vessels and 3,000 marines in the Indian Ocean, 200,000 French expatriates on the continent, "deep economic involvement" in several countries. France, Lamb wrote, had intervened in Africa four times in 13 months and was rumored to be supporting UNITA in Angola. It trades with South Africa, and the Mirage jet which allegedly strafed northern Angola from Zaire just before Shaba II is French-made. This was a nice bit of research by Lamb, and good placement by Time editors. The thrust of the story was that France is in Africa (in French President Giscard d'Estaing's words, quoted by Lamb), to promote "economic and social development" and work "toward peace." But the overwhelming numbers presented by Lamb implied more than a quest for "peace",[77] and left the unshakable impression that the "economic development" sought by France was for France itself, not Africa.

Except for Lamb, Times coverage of French military intervention was generally pro-France. A typical attitude was reflected in a Don Cook column, in which Cook saw French moves as "an act of power on the part of the West to counter the Russian-Cuban challenge." France was "not seeking an exten-

sion of French interests", but was instead defending "legitimate regimes."[78]

Of course, there are those who disagree with the Cook perspective, and you can be sure the *Los Angeles Times* reported what they had to say. You can also be sure that they reported it only once or twice, against countless displays of the Cook view, and that the infrequency of these viewpoints was matched only by the obscurity of their placement in the paper. For example, Nyerere got a little ink on Page Five, June 9, to suggest that "Western nations are planning to dominate the continent under the pretext of defending it."[79] He did not get a full column to elaborate, as did Cook. In a June 14 article, Karen deYoung reported that Cuban Premier Fidel Castro had accused the U.S. of "trying to justify intervention" in Zaire by taking advantage of the Shaba crisis to create a "neocolonialist interventionist pan-African force."[80] By this, Castro meant the "African peace force" installed by the West in Shaba after France removed the bulk of its troops. The "peace force" included soldiers from Gabon, Morocco, and Senegal, all former French colonies. No one, in news story, editorial or column, thought to call these soldiers "stooges" of France, nor were there any editorial cartoons showing White Hunter Giscard d'Estaing walking his "dogs", Leopold Senghor and Omar Bongo, through the African jungle.

Coverage of French military intervention was a high point of Times coverage of Shaba II, thanks in large measure to Lamb. But the Times fell down badly during its coverage - or non-coverage - of Western economic intervention.

The economy of Zaire was mentioned in early articles, but it took a back seat to the East-West and "massacre" approaches. Usually there would be a sidebar, or a paragraph lower in the story describing Shaba as "mineral rich." Sometimes the writer went further, as when Jon Thurber wrote in a sidebar that Shaba supplies nine per cent of the world's copper, as well as cobalt, zinc, silver, and gold, and "is of strategic importance to the whole central African region."[81] Foisie later detailed the importance of cobalt for "space and nuclear technology."[82] The same article said flatly that France had intervened because "without stability in the area, Western nations fear that the whites will refuse to stay to operate the mines."

This theme of whites and minerals kept popping up in the news columns but was not taken any farther. It seems to me an arrow pointing to the answer to the question, "why is there always trouble in Shaba?" In fact, arrows like this are laced all through Times coverage of Shaba II, but nobody

ever seems to follow them. We have already seen that the Times news columns contain an enormous amount of important information, but it is scattered and uncoordinated, and subordinated to lesser, frivolous stuff like "black savage" stories. It is as though Times editorial personnel collectively do not know the difference between caviar and horsemeat, journalistically speaking, and eat the horsemeat every time. This failure to pursue the most important themes, even when those themes are right in front of their noses and giving them the raspberry, is to me *the* most basic failure of Times reporting of Shaba II. Nowhere did it show up more glaringly than in coverage of Shaba's economy.

Examples of important points raised, then dropped:

- "Even after 18 years of independence, the Zaire government remains dependent on foreign managerial assistance, although there are some qualified Zairian mining engineers."[83] Why? Why are not Zairians able to manage the copper mines? Are they too dumb to learn, being given, as they are, to voodoo and savagery? Or is there another explanation, and might that explanation shed some light on Shaba II? Could Don Cook be wrong when he says the French do not seek any gain for themselves through their African escapades?

- "The vast majority of people (in Zaire) are impoverished" ...despite "enormous mineral wealth and agricultural potential." Again, same article: "colonial investments in railways, ports, roads...left the mass of the population untouched."[84] Is this really true? Why? Could they have been touched in a less obvious way? Could the answer to some of Shaba's difficulties lie in the production and distribution of its "enormous mineral wealth?"

- "Most of those leaving Shaba were Belgian nationals under contract to *oversee black laborers*." (emphasis mine).[85]

- "Most of the whites in black-ruled Africa...stay only a few years." Europeans are a "privileged class" in Africa. "Anger has been vented" on the "merchant class, Asians and Lebanese", who took money out of Africa and "gave nothing in return."[86]

- There is a "cash flow out of the country (Zaire)."[87]

- "Africa wants investment...that will provide jobs and training and opportunities for Africans, not expatriates."[88] Really? What about Zaire? What about those

200,000 Frenchmen "deeply involved" in African economies?

- "Half the adult population of Africa cannot find work." This creates a "social time bomb."[89] Is there high unemployment in Shaba? Is it related to the high white employment? We know there are unions in Shaba, though the Times did not report it.[90] Did the "social time bomb" explode there? If not, will it?

There is more of this, lots more, hints about white privilege and black poverty, about tensions in Shaba's relations of production. Most of it is buried in stories stressing something else, and all of it is treated as though it had nothing to do with the very story that was being covered, a military adventure by someone, for some reason, in that part of Zaire which contains most of its mineral wealth. The Times acted like a man who believes his feet keep him alive, not his heart. "Yes, I have a heart - hear it thumping? - but it is not important; let's talk about my feet; that is where the blood is pumped from."

Most coverage at this stage, then, for whatever reasons, implied that the Western economic presence in Zaire was a good thing, a stabilizing thing. The degree of intervention, however, must have been alarming to even a casual observer. On June 7 the Associated Press reported from Paris that "American and European experts on Africa" said Zaire needed $100 million from the West to "prevent military and economic collapse."[91] A meeting of Western leaders was set for Brussels. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank would be there, but not Africans, yet. By June 14 Zaire had agreed to let foreigners run the central bank and Finance Ministry. An IMF official with his own staff was to be principal director of the Bank of Zaire.[92]

This sounds more like an undisguised return to old-style colonialism than the more ubiquitous neo-colonialism: the economy overtly in the hands of the IMF and the World Bank, Western-backed troops propping up the regime and protecting whites, who in turn have to be there because Africans are not "capable" of running the show themselves.

Western reporters did not ask a lot of questions about this arrangement, in part for reasons we have discussed, but also because some of them thought the Western takeover necessary. The reason: the corruption of Mobutu Sese Seko and his cohorts. Western intervention may or may not be good, they thought, but what can you do? Mobutu has wrecked the joint. Disregarding the paternalism here, there is enough truth in the charge to discourage a lethargic reporter from

investigating further. However, there *is* more to it than that. Let us examine what scholars have to say about Mobutu, Europe (including the U.S.), and the development of Zaire's socio-politico-economic system.

Several assumptions underlie the belief that Western control of Zaire's economy is just what Zaire needs. One is that the West has not already been involved in Zaire's economy to any controlling extent. In fact, the West has had not only its finger, but its whole hand in the Zairian pie, before and after independence.

The U.S., for example, has provided Zaire with some $400 million in aid since 1962, according to Kenneth Edelman.[93] The one American killed during Shaba II was working for Morrison-Knudsen, which is involved in building a power line to bring electrical power from the lower Zaire River to the Shaba region. "On completion, Inga II (the power project) will have cost more than half a billion dollars, $250 million each for the dam itself and the power line to Shaba."[94]

The U.S. has been involved in Zaire in other ways as well. As we have seen, LeMarchand argues that the CIA has helped prop up Mobutu for years. And there are other foreign investors in Zaire: Japan, Belgium, England, France, Germany. How, then, can these folks be thought of as "rescuing" Zaire, when in fact they have been themselves involved in the Zaire economy for years?

One can argue that the problem does not stem from their involvement in Zaire's economy, but from misuse of the money they have invested. This is the "blame it on Mobutu" approach, and it is fair enough, as far as it goes; there is more than enough evidence that Zaire's government has misused money. But is that all there is to the story? If the money has been that badly misused, why have these countries who are victims been supporting the man misusing the money for as long as they have? Given that people usually act in their own self-interests, could it be that the so-called misuse of these investments is somehow in the interests of the loaners, or at least not opposed to their interests? If so, might those interests conflict with the interests of the bulk of the citizenry? Might there be a dialectic between Mobutu and foreign investors on the one hand and Zaire's citizens on the other?

And what about Zaire's citizens? We read a lot about Mobutu, but not much about them. Perhaps a reporter would get a better grasp on Shaba II if he tried to see just how Zaire's economy works; if he tried to ascertain why the mass of people live in poverty; why the potentially rich agricultural sector remains undeveloped; whether any of Zaire's

riches get back to Zairians, and, if so, to which Zairians and by which method.

There are many examples of misuse of money in Zaire. Michael G. Schatzberg analyzed this process at a local level in his study of beer distribution in Lisala.[95] He found, among other things, winking at the laws, nepotism, and such a concentration of power at the top of the political structure that there is little but confusion and inefficiency at the lower levels. There is other evidence of corruption, some of it inconspicuous and hard to spot, some of it all too visible. For example, "Mobutu's foreign chalets and luxurious tastes (which) contrast sharply with the widespread poverty of his people."[96]

The sort of thing Schatzberg describes is not unique to beer, or to Lisala. Payoffs and pocketing of money have become so endemic that Mobutu himself calls it the "mal Zairois." But it is a serious mistake to end the analysis there; to assume, as the West and the *Los Angeles Times* do, that this is the only way money is misused in Zaire. It is not.

There is another economic problem in Zaire, a big one, ignored by the American press: it is the use of Western investment money for projects which benefit the investing countries and the Zairian ruling elite at the expense of the peasants. Not only do these projects fail to help the bulk of the population out of poverty, but by filling the coffers of those in charge, thereby giving them more muscle, they perpetuate the poverty of the rural and urban poor.

The Inga project is such an endeavor. Peter Forbath writes that it is becoming a white elephant (no pun intended), continued partly to enhance Mobutu's prestige as the tamer of the mighty Congo River, partly to give control of Shaba to the central government; Shaba cannot secede if Mobutu can pull the plug on them. "With the Inga II project, Mobutu can build up Shaba's copper production, yet keep it safely under his thumb."[97] But Inga II may do more harm than good for the country as a whole. "So voraciously does Inga eat Zaire's money that there is little left for the other development projects...Development of Zaire's agricultural potential...would be a lot cheaper and of more immediate benefit to the people of Zaire."[98]

This cannot be blamed merely on Mobutu's corruption. It has also to do with the World Bank and the IMF, and the uses of their money. The World Bank loans agricultural funds only for "non-food crops that are centrally processed", not for "basic food crops."[99] The latter might lead to self-sufficienty, and the bank wants to encourage an expanded

money economy and foreign exchange.

Similarily, World Bank and IMF funds go to infrastructure: roads, dams, ports, projects like Inga II, that will help the Western backers of these institutions get a return on their investment. Class divisions and exploitation are entrenched by the World Bank, because the agricultural sector and urban and rural poor are molded into a structure designed to serve those same foreign interests, while their own poverty and dependence increase. So you cannot accuse Mobutu of misusing foreign capital when he puts it into copper production instead of agriculture; without the copper there would be no foreign capital. Agricultural production gets it in the neck either way; Western capital is not interested in developing such a non-accumulative sector. As for Mobutu, he may be corrupt, and he may have squirrelled away a lot of money that should be circulating at lower levels, but when it comes to the economy as a whole, he is almost pathetically powerless. If he wants to borrow money, he has to accept the terms set down by the loaning agency; these terms are not conducive to a prosperous and well-fed Zairian citizenry.

All of this is because Zaire has an economy which J. Ph. Peemans calls "peripheral."[100] That is, it is geared toward "the needs of a foreign industrial metropolis...The country is not outside the world industrialization system: it belongs to and participates in it, but in a way that does not lead to an auto-centered process of industrialization."[101] Guy Gran puts it this way: The role of Zaire is "to supply copper, cobalt, other minerals and agricultural products to the industrial countries in return primarily for consumer goods and the multiple needs of the mining sector. The modern sector is thus not focused on or seeking to energize the traditional sector. It is instead conditioned by its international links to use resources and distribute surpluses through multiple exchanges so that value flows out of Zaire." In addition, there are other groups in the "modern sector - the civil service, the army, the polyglot economic elites - competing for that quantum of wealth remaining in the society and moving in certain ways to enlarge their piece of the pie."[102] As Terri F. Gould puts it, "the social class which administers this government owes its very existence to underdevelopment."[103]

In other words, internal corruption and skimming off the top by elites is leading to execrable living conditions for the average Zairois; but so is the foreign orientation of its economy. "Value flows out of Zaire" - when the West puts a dollar in, it wants two dollars to flow back out, less

Mobutu's cut. The Times got the first of these concepts; it missed the second.

Zaire's poor remain poor because the social, political and economic structures of their country have been geared toward producing raw materials for the West instead of solving internal problems and because their rulers have colluded with outside forces to create and continue this exploitation. As Gran says:

> *The process of impoverishment and the policies and institutions which guide them...make a system. The Zairian farmer who cannot get enough reward on his crop to pay for the medicine his sick child needs is contributing a measure of value that ultimately helps to make possible the steak dinner cooked on a copper bottom reverse ware pan by the suburban American housewife...The international economic institutions and the national government of Zaire exist to improve human welfare, but both do something else. They perpetuate poverty for 70-80% of the society and assist the multinationals to transfer wealth to the industrial countries.*[104]

These are difficult concepts for a Western journalist to grasp. He is used to the prevailing Western view that the countries of the world are on separate rungs of a ladder. The U.S. and the other industrialized countries are up toward the top; the underdeveloped countries, so-called, can get there, too, if they will just mimic the West. Andre Gunder Frank calls this the "acculturation view," and describes it thusly: "The West...diffuses knowledge skills, organization, values, technology and capital to a poor nation, until over time, its society, culture and personnel become variants of that which made the Atlantic community economically successful."[105]

A more fitting perspective, however, sees the developed and underdeveloped worlds not as separate entities but as parts of the same organism. In this view, there is a negative correlation between Africa's underdevelopment and Europe's development. The title of a seminal book on this topic - *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* - tells the story.[106] A crucial part of the theory is the hypothesis that much of the capital which allowed Europe to industrialize came from the exploitation of commodities in the rest of the world. One of those commodities was slaves, who poured from Africa like blood from a slit throat, to oil the machines in Europe.[107] It is an old story - and a current one as well - and one of the characters always in the narrative is Mobutu or someone like him, an African collaborator playing ball with the outsiders, satisfied so long as his palm is greased.

This is a troubling perspective, if you are a Western reporter trying to argue that the West is likely to "bail out" Zaire by getting ever more deeply into its economy. You have to rethink a lot of positions, like the helping hand hypothesis, when someone like Frank comes along to point out that much of the industrial world's capital, so generously being "loaned" to Zaire, came in fact "from the consequently now underdeveloped countries"[108] to Western banks and businesses. You cannot smile benignly on the Western investment plans when you are told that "metropolitan investment in and control of primary sector production in underdeveloped countries...has notably failed to develop the underdeveloped countries, but has instead interposed a whole new series of obstacles to their development."[109] And Frank cannot just be written off as a minority of one. His view, he says, "has by now surely been sufficiently documented to be obvious even when viewed from the developed countries themselves."[110]

And so it is in Zaire. The rich get richer, and the poor get poorer. Not only are rural farmers reduced to miserable poverty, but even in an industrial area wage-earners are kept in line.[111] In Zaire, "what is occurring...is not the development of human resources. It is the development of industries designed to serve foreign markets, the profits from which are used to buy consumer goods to maintain the new class of Zairian bourgoisie."[112]

We have come a long way from "the cavalry to the rescue." From the perspective we have just outlined, economic "rescue" of Zaire by the West - which has been the external impetus for the internal exploitation of Zairois for centuries - can hardly be viewed by reporters or anyone else as an unmitigated good. Prescribing Western money to cure Zaire's ills is like prescribing a pillow over the face to save a suffocating man.

Zaire's economy is an extremely complex subject with many more factors than I am able to go into here. Peemans, Gran, Gould and Frank elucidate admirably, and others have done work in this area. I have tried to cover some major concepts. A Western reporter steeped in the view presented here should be able to raise a whole slew of questions about Shaba II which were not raised in the *Los Angeles Times*. For example, what is the relationship between Western money, Zaire's elite (including Mobutu), and those who produce Zaire's wealth, the workers? To what extent are the workers and peasants aware of the nature of both their exploitation and their exploiters? Could this awareness have been a factor in Shaba II? Given the poverty in Shaba, and the white privilege, could there have been local involvement in the uprising? There are unions in

Shaba, and, no matter how well the government has them controlled, unions in Africa have historically been instrumental in uprisings. Were they in this instance? Could there have been a degree of spontaneity in Shaba when the conquering hordes of "rebels" arrived, and might there be popular support for them, not tribal support as the Western press suggests, but the support of poor people of many ethnic backgrounds, who have been robbed too much and for too long? Could there be similar sentiments and similar bubbling fury in other parts of Zaire (remember the story about Bunia which the Times failed to follow up)?

I am not suggesting that the answer is yes to all of these questions. I am merely raising them. This is what the Western press, as its work appeared in the pages of the *Los Angeles Times*, failed to do. You can forgive a reporter for not being able to get the answer to an important question; it is less easy to forgive if he never asked the question in the first place.

Whether these inquiries would have been answered is hard to say. Information about the dynamics of Shaba II is elusive; nothing I have seen in the press or journals really explains what happened there in 1978. Fuller answers probably will be a while getting to us. However, by exploring this country, and staking out some of it, we have been able to go a long way past the "Cuban invasion", "savage massacre", and "Western rescue" pulp serial presented in the Times.

Shaba II Revisited

This is how a revised news summary would look, and I emphasize that much of the information to be presented here comes from the Times own stories, but given different emphasis:

For several years after the Angolan Civil War ended, fighting continued in parts of Angola. One of those involved in trying to overthrow Angola's MPLA government was President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, who supported, overtly or covertly, troops fighting the MPLA in southeast Angola, along the Zaire-Angola border, and in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda, where Angola's oil deposits lay.

In 1977, a group called the FNLC entered Zaire from Angola, but were forced back across the border by Western troops. Border fighting continued, including air raids into Angola by French Mirage jets from Zaire.

In May of 1978, the FNLC entered Shaba again. Nobody is sure who they are, but they are believed to have had

their genesis in the Katanga gendarmerie of Moise Tshombe's days 15 years ago, and been joined since then by others who have fled Zaire for one reason or another. Their ethnic make-up may be primarily Lunda, but it is possible that ethnicity is not the glue which holds them together; regionalism or other factors may be more important. The group's nexus is in an industrial area, Shaba, where tribal consciousness begins to wane as economic exploitation, which crosses tribal lines, waxes. Nor is the FNLC ideologically-oriented, having fought for both white colonialists and black nationalists during its long history.

The FNLC was armed by the USSR and trained by Cuba when they all were fighting with the MPLA several years ago. But neither Cuba nor Angola is likely to have prodded this move into Zaire;Angola, because it is still fighting a civil war, Cuba because it is already overextended in Africa. In fact, Cuban Premier Fidel Castro tried to stop the FNLC. But the FNLC apparently calls its own shots. Angola, though it opposed the FNLC move into Zaire, would nevertheless probably be relieved to be rid of the FNLC, as it is a free-floating army with no loyalty to anyone, and subject to no discipline except its own.

The FNLC apparently entered Shaba with the support of the local black population and continued to receive it. European expatriates, numerous in Shaba, were taken hostage and, after several days, 130 were killed. Nobody is sure who killed whom, or why, but the murders seem to have occurred for different reasons in different circumstances. Some of the white dead may have been killed when used as shields by Mobutu's retreating army; others may have been shot by the French military. White sources reported the FNLC reverted to "natural savagery" after drinking stolen liquor; but they offered no specifics, and the "natural savagery" explanation was contradicted by other reports of the FNLC acting with concern and courage. Incidents were reported of solicitude toward Europeans by members of both the FNLC and Mobutu's army, and the Angolan govenment guaranteed the safety of any whites taken into Angola by the FNLC. Although Mobutu claimed some 60 white hostages were taken into Angola by the FNLC and executed, it is possible that at most six French paramilitary personnel were taken. We do not know what happened to them, if indeed they were seized, which may not have happended.

Several hundred Africans were killed; in what circumstances, nobody has bothered to investigate.

France sent troops to Shaba, including the French Foreign Legion, and other Western nations sent military supplies. It was the 11th African country to have a French

military presence, and represented increasing French involvement, military and economic, in Africa. France says it intends to defend the "Free World" against the spread of communism; it is in Zaire, it said, to counter the "Soviet-Cuban challenge", although neither of those countries was behind the FNLC. French troops occupied Shaba for a while, then brought in soldiers from several African countries, all former French colonies like Gabon. The purpose of this "peace force" was to stabilize Shaba and protect the whites who work there. The West also took formal control of the central economy of Zaire, through the IMF. This was done, the West implied, because the Mobutu government, which owes the West a lot of money, has proven itself incompetent to administer the economy of Zaire without Western guidance.

It is an open question whether this economic takeover by the West is in the best interests of Zaire as a whole. The West has been involved in the economy of Zaire for years, and it has not done the average Zairian much good. This is because Western aid goes to projects which enhance the economic fortunes of the West, and a small elite in Zaire led by Mobutu, while sapping the rest of the people in Zaire. This combination - the flow of capital out of the country to the coffers of the West, combined with the corruption of Zaire's ruling elite - have severely hurt Zaire's economy and peasantry. There is sample evidence for this. Therefore, this process - the impoverishment of the many for the benefit of the few - could be intensified by further Western encroachment in Zaire, and could lead to more trouble in Shaba. Since the process works throughout the country, there also could be trouble elsewhere; there already have been disturbances reported in Bunia and Bunduku this year.

Nobody is sure why there was trouble in Shaba this time. But the economy of Zaire is in bad shape, as is its social structure. Despite great mineral and agricultural potential, the mass of Zairois are poverty-stricken. There is great discontent with Mobutu's regime all over the country. Much of this discontent is in Shaba, and may have had something to do with the fighting; at the very least it explains the local support given the FNLC. In addition, whites in Shaba live lives of great privilege and relative luxury while the bulk of the Africans are isolated in the cité. Resentment by Africans at this neo-colonial setup might have contributed to the trouble in Shaba; so might the overwhelming dependence on European technical personnel, who keep Africans from assuming managerial and other higher-echelon jobs.

In the United States, the Carter Administration told the public that it saw Shaba II as a further attempt by the

USSR and Cuba to extend its influence in Africa, although the Administration had information that Cuban Premier Fidel Castro had tried to stop the FNLC from entering Zaire. French presence in Shaba and throughout Africa is seen by the Administration as defensive, not as "extension of French influence." Carter said defending Zaire is in the "national security" interests of the U.S., and sent military supplies. He said he wished he could do more, but felt hampered by the Clark Amendment. Senator Clark said he feared Carter was using Shaba II as an excuse to get the Clark Amendment repealed. Carter has not done this yet. Carter, while advocating the propping up of Mobutu's regime, neglected to discuss that regime in the context of his world-wide human rights campaign.

Well, that summary is not your typical zippy news story; you could not extract any "rape, killing spree" headlines from it. It is cautious, hedged: on the one hand this on the other hand that; a lot of "mights" and "maybes." It says flat out that a lot of things are not known, and admits to much speculation.

Perhaps the very complexity of this news summary is one reason why it did not appear this way. Cubans and massacre stories are easier to deal with, livelier, more readable - even if they are distortions and half-truths. Simple-minded reporting like this leads to misinformed, and, eventually, simple-minded readers.

This is, in the final analysis, a paper not about Zaire, but about press coverage of Zaire. So it should be concluded with a section on what the press says about its foreign coverage - it thinks about and discusses this matter - and what this paper can contribute toward that discussion; what lessons can be learned, what mistakes have been made, how it can be done better next time.

First, however, a word about the *Los Angeles Times* and David Lamb. The Times, to its credit, sent Lamb to Zaire in August, three months after the first story appeared, to put Shaba II in perspective. To a limited extent, he did.

For example, he got right to the heart of the racial and economic resentment issue: "'This wasn't a neo-colonial town', a Zairian mine executive said. 'It was a colonial town. Nothing had changed. It was a town for whites, not blacks. The old boys treated their Zairian assistants in the mines like their houseboys.'"[113]

Lamb also wrote about the corruption of Mobutu and the widespread poverty, which, he wrote, has transformed "this land of plenty...into a nation of beggars, paupers, and

thieves."[114] He uses figures for this story which indicate he has done some research. And, he actually talks to Africans to get some of his information; middle-class Africans, to be sure, but Africans nonetheless, which is an improvement over the French Defense Ministry.

Lamb also devoted an entire story to the rocket launching base in Kamina;[115] wrote a piece on the economy which asked why the mines, supposedly severely damaged, were able to reopen so quickly (a good question, the sort Western reporters are not given to asking, and one which I would like to see answered);[116] and reported that the "Cuban invasion" information came from UNITA.[117]

All this was impressive as far as it went. But it was marred by some weaknesses we have discussed before. In the first place, it came too late to undo the damage already done by weeks of misinformation which had appeared on the Times pages in May and June. This is the fault of the Times desk, not Lamb, for deciding to wait so long to clear things up.

A more serious problem was the acceptance by Lamb of some of the Western mythology we have discussed. For example, after graphically describing Mobutu's corruption, he went on to imply that corruption is the *only* thing wrong with the Zairian economy. Then he drew in the "helping hand" scenario, apparently accepting it fully: "'If (Mobutu) can keep juggling things a little while longer *and the West puts together its economic rescue operation*, I think there is a chance he can ride out another crisis,' a Belgian economist said." [118] (emphasis mine). In the article about the Kamina launching facility, he pooh-poohed fears that the facility might be used for military purposes, fears he saw as Soviet-inspired. Lamb says "there is nothing to suggest that the base is intended for anything other than what (is) claimed. The CIA and the West German government have denied that cruise missiles are in any way involved in the program." The "project is purely commercial and has no military or nuclear implications."[119]

Although Lamb did not go far enough, he went a lot farther in this series than a lot of his predecessors in Shaba. After reading the general coverage during May and June, the Africanist comes to be grateful for the clarification Lamb provides, however flawed.

Why the Times Erred, and Free Advice on How to do Better

We have seen that the *Los Angeles Times* distorted events in Shaba this year; let us reiterate their mistakes and

extract patterns that might help us to understand coverage of not only Shaba II, but other African coverage, and perhaps newspaper reports from all over the Third World.

Some difficulties are mechanical. It is not our intention to deal with those here. The press, in focusing on mechanical problems has failed to go beyond them to deal with a more serious problem: assumptions. Assumptions caused Western reporters and editors to handle Shaba II in a particular way, and even determined at what point the story - which, as we have seen, is larger than Shaba II, began before Shaba II, and continues in both Angola and Zaire today - was to be picked up, and dropped. One set of assumptions is based in cultural Eurocentrism (Euro including the United States): an unspoken (and perhaps unrealized) disdain for the abilities of Africa and Africans. The other is based in political Eurocentrism. These work together with other factors to cause certain questions to be asked, others left unformed, certain emphases to be taken.

Crisis coverage: The biggest gripe Africans have about American coverage of Africa is that it occurs, in Chinua Achebe's words, only "when there is bad news like a military coup or a natural disaster."[120] It is worth quoting Aaron Segal at length on this:

> *Candidly editors will explain why Africa is usually not considered to be newsworthy. Since independence, Africans killing Africans has become a tired story of little interest unless the scale is impressive (Nigeria), or other powers are involved (Angola). Africans killing whites is news, as witness the Congo stories of the 1960s or the stories on Rhodesia or Mozambique. The occasional feature story on the future of African wildlife or the valiant American missionary is also marketable, generally at the hometown level. Often these are the stories that most infuriate Aficans traveling or studying in the United States.*[121]

But editors are not the only ones to blame for this. Bill Jordan (then writing as William A. Payne) quotes a correspondent: "why the hell should anyone but a specialist be interested in the Congo, when there is not a crisis there?"[122] Reporters and editors, then, simply do not consider Africa newsworthy except under violent circumstances. They blame this on their readers, but the trouble might lie within themselves. As William Hatchen points out, readers are not interested in Africa because their interest has remained unwhetted by newspapers in their areas. And so the vicious circle spins.[123]

The result is crisis coverage. Treating Shaba II as a crisis hindered understanding of the story by depriving it of a context. In the months preceding the FNLC's entry into Shaba, we were not told about Zaire's incursions to Angola, the continuing attempts to bring down Angola's government by Zaire and others, Mobutu's corruption, Zaire's declining economy and growing impoverishment, the growing gap between rich and poor, growing resentment of white privilege. All of a sudden, pouf! There was a sudden and inexplicable "crisis" in Shaba. The only slot the Western press could fit this in was Cuban expansionism; most of the stories about Africa in the Times for the six months preceding Shaba II had worried about Cuba in Ethiopia, Cuba here, Cuba there. Since Cubans were 20,000 strong in Angola, the press leapt at this explanation like a pack of ravenous dogs, as soon as Mobutu threw it to them. Why did the press end up in this bind? Because it ignored important and revealing news out of Shaba and Zaire for months preceding Shaba II. Why did it do that? Because such news was not "newsworthy." Why was it not newsworthy? Because Africa and Africans are not important enough to write about unless they are engaged in violence (Biafra, Angola, Shaba), buffoonery (Emperor Bokassa I), or both (Idi Amin). The effect on the reader is easy enough to measure: he is misinformed. Because he has no context to put this story in, he has to take the limited and misleading one now served up by the snoozing press. As Liebling points out, "big news, whether of a revolt in Algeria or a Guatemalan purchase of communist arms always comes as a colossal surprise to the reader who has never been told that the Algerians are angry, or that the Guatemalan government...first has been refused permission to buy arms here."[124] To remedy this crisis-orientation, reporters in Africa must accustom themselves to watching the volcano spark and gurgle, instead of waiting until it erupts. To do that, they are going to have to admit to themselves that the volcano is worth keeping an eye on; worthy of respect and attention, as it were. If they find that it is not, they should go away from there.

Sources: If the American media think Africans are not newsworthy except during crises, they have even less regard for them as sources. There is a sliding scale of importance for Western reporters seeking sources in Africa: any white; African political leaders and elites; guerrilla leaders (as a next-to-last resort); African peasants and workers (as a last resort, and sometimes not even then). That American correspondents neglect this source is really nothing short of a disgrace, since they purport to be writing about Africa. If this is Africa, where are the Africans? Underlying all this is the nasty little secret that Western reporters do not like to talk about, at least not in print: they do not like to mingle with Africans.[125] They end up in the good old boy network of old

colonial hands, dining at the Nairobi Hilton, drinking at the bar of the New Stanley, living in the European quarters. If you do not think this affects news coverage from Africa, I have got a bridge I would like to sell you. Try to imagine how many of the "reliable" and "impartial" sources you encounter so often in stories from Africa were met by the reporter in these places. Then think about just how "impartial" they are. And try to imagine just why they are considered more "reliable" than black Africans. I am not suggesting that correspondents turn in their Land Rovers for a pirogue and paddle up the river to live in a mud hut (although Richard Critchfield is ready to suggest this, as will be discussed later); but they certainly should make some attempt to widen their contact with the society in which they live.

The Ignoble Savage: This syndrome is another attitudinal one, and is related to the previous point. As we have seen, Foisie, Heintzerling and others like to explain African events in terms of native savagery, or, more frequently, tribalism. It is hard to believe that anyone who has lived in, or studied, Africa can believe that "voodoo" nonsense, or blame complex matters on tribalism, when tribalism is merely one ingredient in a well-stocked Mulligan stew, an ingredient whose flavor is weaker or stronger depending on the other ingredients, the stewpot, and the fire, and which may be lacking altogether in some stews. Foisie and Heintzerling are based in Johannesburg, so it seems reasonable to conclude that South African whites are shaping their perspectives; Tom Lambert, Foisie's predecessor in Johannesburg, wrote releases about the Angolan Civil War that looked as though they were hot off a printing press in John Vorster's office.[126] (Perhaps Johannesburg correspondents should get psychological hardship pay.) There are offenders in other places than Johannesburg, however, and it seems to me a matter of professional responsibility to try to resist having your perceptions molded by people who have a stake in the stories you are covering, no matter who those people are, or what their persuasion.

Almost racism: Racism is a strong word, and an incendiary one. Yet the heavy emphasis by the Times on how many Europeans were killed in Shaba, the "reign of terror" and "massacre" headlines, the emphasis on primitive savagery, combined with the tardy, then superficial and dehumanized coverage given the African dead and wounded, are almost racism. The underlying and unstated assumption is that a dead or wounded white is more valuable than a dead or wounded black.

Someday They Will be Ready (Maybe), But not Yet: We have already seen that white dead are more important than black dead; that white sources are more reliable than black sources; that Africans are innately savages who can neither hold their

liquor nor excape from tribalism; and that Africa is important only when there is a crisis there. We must add that Africans cannot handle independence. This is another underlying assumption, seldom voiced but clearly present, of Times coverage of Shaba II. It is a latter-day expression of the paternalism carried in their soutanes by European missionaries to Africa so long ago. It shows up most clearly in coverage of Mobutu, but appears in other stories as well.

For example, if reporters do not accept this as a working assumption, then how to explain the fact that nobody thought to question the need for European managerial and technical personnel in Shaba, *18 years after independence*. The press is always talking about how few college graduates Zaire had at independence,[127] but they have been using that excuse so long they have forgotten to notice calendar pages flying away; independence was a long time ago, and if Africans have not been trained for these jobs by this time, there is another reason, or reasons. It just might be that Europe does not want Africans who can run their own show; where would that leave Europe? The fact that the huge number of European technical personnel in Shaba never was questioned, indicates that the Western press found nothing unusual about it. Why? Because Africans are incompetent; Europeans *have* to be brought in. As for Mobutu, his evident corruption was taken as the *only*, or principal cause of Zaire's economic woes; the only solution is rescue by the West, whose European expertise is as reassuring and competent as Africa's is alarming and incompetent. Thus the equation is complete. Nobody thought to question whether Western aid was going to help; it was taken for granted - it is, after all, *Western* (meaning European) aid. How could there be anything wrong with that? Nor did it occur to the press that Zaire might nourish in its population of 25 million a leader of leaders more competent and less corrupt than Mobutu Sese Seko and his cronies; we have seen Mobutu and when you have seen one African political leader, you have seen them all.

All of the above points seem to me to betray an underlying disdain for Africa and Africans; to devalue them in one way or another. These attitudes are very real in news stories from Africa, and were manifest in the Shaba II coverage. Sometimes they jumped right out at you, sometimes they peeped from between the lines, but their presence is indisputable. It is time for American correspondents in Africa to examine their copy, and their consciences, and deal with their own prejudices. Not only is this crucial to getting a more accurate story to readers in the United States, but it might help American correspondents to understand the very real basis of distortions which African "think they see" (in Don Cook's arrogant and patronizing phrase)[128] in Western coverage of Africa.

Why the Times Erred (Continued); and More Free Advice

Another set of biases underlies Western news coverage of Africa, as exemplified by the Shaba II story in the *Los Angeles Times*; these are political biases. "The news coming out of Africa is often, if not always related to the already biased and prejudiced mind that keeps asking such questions as 'Is this pro-East or pro-West?' Very few, if any, of the world's press ask such logical, and, in our view,simple questions as: 'Is this pro-African?'"[129]

Russell Warren Howe and all too many other American correspondents interpret remarks like these by the late Tom Mboya and those who think like him to mean that Africans want nothing but good news printed. It is just the opposite: they want something other than bad news to appear. But Howe and others miss the point: "Our basic task is not to promote African interests...promoting African interests is not our role or duty. Our task is to interpret." He adds that "I do not think there is cause for serious complaint about American coverage of Africa in general."[130] Howe covered Africa for the *Washington Post* and *Baltimore Sun*, and it is appalling that a man entrusted with such a job should have such little intellectual depth. He blames intransigent African politicians for the poor quality of American news coverage,[131] and seems to believe that he and his colleagues "interpret" events with some sort of computer-like objectivity, rather than as representatives of a particular culture, who have imbibed the political myths of that culture. Coverage of Shaba II, though it did not involve Howe, belies this perspective. Political bias there took several forms.

The Good Guys and the Bad Guys: This is the assumption that "pro-West" governments act only in self-defense. Thus, Shaba II is news because it involves an "invasion" of a "pro-West" country by forces from a "Marxist" country. The Zairian actions against Cabinda and Angola which preceded Shaba II and the continued attempts by the West (including South Africa as a "Western" country) are not news. How could they be when the West never acts aggressively toward another country? When Cuba inevitably beefs up its forces in Angola to counter the attempts at overthrow, *then* it will become news, no doubt, but the news will be that "Cuba is trying to extend its influence in Africa still further; the U.S. views it with concern."

Guns, We Will Write About; Butter, No: The Western press feels the only intervention in Africa worth mentioning is military intervention. Thus Cuba, Russia and even France are noticed when they send troops, as they should be. But economic intervention - more pervasive, more enduring, more

insidious, more harmful to Africans, and less complimentary to the West - is not considered newsworthy. Calling attention to it might make the West look bad (see above, *The Helping Hand*); but it also might help to explain military adventures, which are rooted in, and inseparable from, the economic exploitation which precedes them. One reason this is not explored is because the sources the Western press use are not eager to call their attention to it, working, as they do, for U.S., French, or Belgian governmental or economic interests.

The effect of all this is that the news and editorial columns of the Times are used to promote U.S. interests and points of view. Some people think this is a plot - that editors and government officials sit down and work it all out. It does not work this way, although there have been attempts by the government to use the media in the U.S. Marchetti and Marks in their book on the CIA[132] describe chillingly how this works. The used, however, usually are not reporters in the field, who have grown wary; they are editors or columnists, like Don Cook or Joseph Kraft. These people, and editorialists, are not in the business of reporting news in the first place. They interpret, as Howe would put it, but they do so with so little information about the events they are interpreting that their columns often are echoes of their sources, who often are close to the government. In fact editorialists and columnists are some of the most useless people in the profession; qualifications for writing an editorial, for example, are not wisdom, but ownership of a newspaper, or employment (and control) by a newspaper owner. God knows how columnists are made, but an advanced thinking apparatus is not one of the qualifications. Liebling summed editorialists and columnists nicely when he described the "three kinds of writers of news in our generation":

1. The reporter, who writes what he sees.
2. The interpretive reporter, who writes what he sees and what he construes to be its meaning.
3. The expert, who writes what he construes to be the meaning of what he has not seen.[133]

Kraft, Cook and the Times editorialist who called Cubans "Russian stooges" are "experts." As amusing as Liebling's description is, the humor begins to wane when you consider how these people are being used and how widely circulated their "expertise" is.

Reporters, on the other hand, because they are wary, are not used overtly that way. If there is any "plot" to affect their coverage, it is the same plot any country has: to educate their children in a particular perspective, then put them as adults in positions where they will perpetuate the

country's traditional views, its mythology. These are the people reporting from Africa; grown up now, but molded. (They can break the mold, of course, but if they do they are not likely to find jobs with the major U.S. media). Often, they do not realize they are trapped in a particular world view; they call themselves "objective", and deny bias. Self-knowledge is a difficult thing; when Richard Nixon said, "I am not a crook," he believed it. But bias is part of the human condition; it is a human failing, and one which journalists have a special occupational obligation to acknowledge and try to rise above, as much as possible.

What To Do About It

There are several ways to begin working out of what I hope I have shown is a serious problem of Western press coverage of Africa. Some have been discussed in the "free advice" sections, others are new concepts.

Smart writers: Robin Hallett quotes Keith Middlemass as saying that "the contemporary historian has two advantages over the journalist; time to watch processes and analytical skill."[134] It is stingy of Middlemass to deny these advantages to journalists, especially analytical skill. Perhaps he feels journalists have denied themselves. If so, then perhaps it is time for them to develop analytical skills; there is no reason they cannot. Reporters can develop these skills either before going to Africa, or after arriving there, or (preferably) both. Much of this is out of the reporter's hands, and in the hands of newspaper personnel departments. For some reason, specialists are shied away from, and generalists are used. Most people who worry about reporting from Africa, however, believe specialists are necessary. Hatchen, for example, writes, "better-trained reporters, well versed in African history, politics, languages, and problems (would be a) beginning for improving coverage of Africa in American news media."[135] Newspapers say they want versatility in their reporters, but there is no reason an Africanist (or Latin Americanist) cannot be versatile and a specialist both. Journalists could be trained in African studies, or Africanists could be given an introduction to journalism principles. Special programs could be established or existing programs like the M.A. in African Studies at UCLA, could be used. I personally know of two professional reporters in the UCLA African Studies program, and met a Latin Americanist with strong journalist credentials when I was at Cal State University, Fresno; surely there are others with expertise in both disciplines, or with expertise in one and a willingness to learn the other, who could be used by the American media in Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere, to improve news coverage.

Even if non-Africanists are sent to report in Africa, there is no reason they cannot learn more than they apparently do, by going to the libraries and studying Africa on their own. Libraries contain much that has been written by people who know what they are talking about, and who have researched various African problems extensively; to ignore these sources as background, and instead turn only to the more biased old colonial hands and Embassy officials, is to do a poor job of covering Africa.

Some reporters begin to get the hand of what is going on after they have been in their assignment for a year or two; Lamb in Nairobi is an example. Just when they are beginning to master it, however, they are transferred. In the case of the New York Times, Aaron Segal writes, this is because the paper "is concerned that its writers may become too emotionally involved with one area of the world and like to keep their tours to a year maximum."[136] I have seen this kind of thinking at the local level, shuffling reporters around among courts, city, county, police, and it is probably why *Los Angeles Times* correspondents do not last more than a year or two in Africa. (Stanley Meisler, who was with the *Los Angeles Times* in Nairobi for 11 years, is an exception; perhaps his longevity there had something to do with the quality of his writing, which is universally acclaimed to be very high indeed. Segal, however, says that "journalists who show a preference for staying in Africa are often regarded as partly demented and their careers hindered.")[137] French journalists, on the other hand, "are encouraged to stay put and become experts."[138]

There is no question that a reporter who stays in an area for a long time is going to learn more about the area than if he is on a short-term assignment. What Bill Jordan calls "the present prejudice against long-term area specialization"[139] has been a major contributor to the press problems outlined in this paper: crisis coverage, lack of context, and all the rest. Jordan lauds the *New York Times*, "which had seasoned reporters stationed in Vietnam...and which invested a great deal of time, money and talent in getting ready for the developing story long before it was on page one."[140] Had this been done in Africa, perhaps Shaba II would not have caught the Western press so flatfooted.

Expanding Horizons: It also would improve news coverage if Western reporters learned to see things in terms of processes and long-range events. This is the antithesis of crisis coverage. It may very well be that nobody is interested in the Congo unless someone is getting shot there, or Managua unless there is a coup or earthquake; but the fact remains that every crisis occurs in larger contexts: larger geographical

contexts and larger time contexts. We have already seen that viewing Shaba II in a wider time and space frame adds to understanding the events which occurred there in May. Richard Critchfield is prepared to go one further. He writes, in an important article, that the Western media are "missing the story of the century:" the three billion peasants, three-quarters of the world's population, who live in the world's villages.[141]

We seem to be wandering away from Shaba, but we really are not, because it includes the peasants Critchfield is writing about. It is worth dwelling on Critchfield's perspective, so alien is it to traditional news coverage of Africa, or of the industrial countries for that matter. Critchfield emphasizes not the leaders, but the led, not events, but processes.

"If the world's poor are not rioting, revolting, or dying of famine," he writes, "they are customarily kept out of sight and out of mind." When they get into trouble, for whatever reasons, and hit the headlines, "we are likely to possess little real knowledge of why they starve or rebel, and we are usually diverted by some new sensational happening before we can find out the reasons for their predicament."[142] But, he writes, "there should be no doubt that these people are worth our attention: all the major contemporary revolutions - in Mexico, Russia, China, Indochina, Egypt, Algeria, Cuba, Angola - have involved peasant societies."[143]

Critchfield suggests that reporters live in, and study, rural villages, for four to six months at a time, as anthropologists/journalists; he has been doing this for a decade. His contention is that "in any foreign country there is a reality out there beyond the politicians and generals, the foreign ministry briefings, cabinet minister interviews, and the tight little world of the national press."[144]

Is this journalistic heresy? Is Critchfield a crackpot? A naive romantic? I think he is a realist, who has put forth one of the most responsible ideas for foreign coverage I have seen. Yet even he knows how it is likely to be received: "I realize all this sounds totally unrealistic, and goes against almost every trend in foreign reporting today - which is precisely why it should be done." He goes on to explain how it can be accomplished.[145]

I have drawn in Critchfield's argument not only because it has merit, but also to show that Western news coverage of Africa and the rest of the Third World need not be moribund. The mistakes of Shaba II do not have to be repeated till the end of time. There are people with new ideas; what is needed, as a beginning, is for reporters and editors to let

some new thoughts and perspective seep into their frazzled minds, and, perhaps, act on them one day.

Looking in the Mirror: The corollary to admitting new thoughts is airing out the old ones; acknowledging that you have prejudices and biases, cultural and political. If one theme has emerged in this paper it is that reporters and deskmen do have prejudices, and those prejudices are affecting - negatively - the way they do their jobs. As a consequence, readers are being misinformed, Africa is being badly served, and the newspaper and reporter are not fulfilling their stated functions. If reporters and editors did learn to understand their own prejudices, they might be a little less eager to buy the first box of "truth" being sold, merely because the guy selling it happens to speak their language, has the same color skin, or is on the right side politically. They would learn to see that, in the complexity of events, everyone pushing his portion of truth must be given equal weight, and the whole sifted as carefully as possible, not perfunctorily. As Georgie Anne Geyer writes, "the only 'truth' that the best people who really work honestly in the areas of information ever learn is the absolute relativity of all interpretations and perceptions of it. In today's world, it is not the truth that sets you free, but a deep sense of the relativity of it."[146] That "deep sense", which can emerge only through self-examination, is an important part of the "sifting process." The story that emerges after the sifting might not be perfect; but it is likely to avoid many of the traps the *Los Angeles Times* plunged into during its attempts to cover Shaba II.

Footnotes

1. Times Wire Services (TWS). "Rebels Invade Zaire; Cuban Force Reported," *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1978, Part I, p. 1.

2. Foisie, Jack, "Remaining Rebel Resistance Cleared From Town of Kolwezi," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, 1978, Part I, p. 1.

3. Editorial, "The Games Cubans Play," *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1978, Part II, p. 4.

4. Kraft, Joseph, "Getting Rough With Castro," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1978, Part II, p. 9.

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10. Young, Crawford, "Zaire: The Unending Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 57, 1 (Fall 1978), p. 182.

11. deYoung, "Cuban President," p. 9.

12. Young, "Zaire," p. 182.

13. Dominguez, Jorge, I., "Cuban Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 57, 1 (Fall 1978), pp. 99-100.

14. See especially Oswald Johnston, "Carter Modifies Criticism of Cuban Role in Zaire," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 1978, Part I, p. 1; and deYoung, "Cuban President," p. 9.

15. See, for example, Bill Mauldin cartoon, *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1978, Part II, p. 4.

16. Dominguez, "Cuban Foreign Policy," p. 101.

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18. TWS. "Battles Raging Over Two Key Towns in Zaire," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1978, Part I, p. 1.

19. Kempster, Norman, "U.S. Says Cubans Trained Rebels, Begins Aid Airlift," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1978, Part I, p. 1.

20. TWS. "Tanzanian President Defends Soviet and Cuban Roles in Africa," *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, Part I, p. 5; Associated Press (AP). "U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young Interviewed on African Issues," *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, Part I, p. 5 (notice the Times policy of lumping dissident positions together on the same page, the same day, and neatly disposing of them that way); TWS. "France and Belgium to Help Train 15,000 Zairian Soldiers," *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 1978, Part I, p. 5 (Neto was buried in this story).

21. AP. "U.S. Senate Committee to Query CIA Over Cuban Involvement in Zaire," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1978, Part I, p. 6.

22. AP. "Senators Briefed by CIA Chief, Disagree on Cuba's Zaire Role," *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 1978, Part I, p. 14. McGovern was not featured in this story; CIA Director Turner was. Other dissident (from the Carter Administration) views also were buried. For example, Angolan Foreign Minister Paulo Texeira Jorge got some lines on page 7, June 7; and Rep. Parren Mitchell and the Congressional Black Caucus were put on page 7 the same day. No page one for them; just an ignominious lumping together in the back somewhere.

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28. Bender, "Angola, the Cubans," p. 16.

29. LeMarchand, Rene, "The CIA in Africa: How Central? How Intelligent?," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, 3, 1976, pp. 418-19.

30. Himmelstrand, Ulf, "The Problem of Cultural Translation in the Reporting of African Social Realities," in Stokke Olav, ed., *Reporting Africa*. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1971, p. 120.

31. Johnson, Maureen, "Rhodesia Blacks Unexcited by Integration," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1978, Part I, p. 22.

32. Himmelstrand, "The Problem," p. 120.

33. TWS. "Rebels Invade Zaire," p. 1.

34. O'Brien, Connor Cruise. *To Katanga and Back*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962, p. 201.

35. Bender, "Angola, the Cubans," p. 15.

36. Shuster, Mike and Witney Schneidman, "Zaire Battlefront: West Stakes Fresh Claims in Africa," *Southern Africa* XI, 6 (August 1978), p. 6.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

39. Young, "Zaire: The Unending," p. 179.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

41. Bender, "Angola, the Cubans," pp. 15-16.

42. For a thorough history of the Cabinda enclave see Phyllis M. Martin, "The Cabinda Connection, An Historical Perspective," *African Affairs* 76, pp. 45-49.

43. Shuster and Schneidman, "Zaire Battlefront," p. 5.

44. Young, "Zaire: The Unending," p. 179.

45. Bender, "Angola, the Cubans," p. 14.

46. For a trenchant analysis of the misuse of the English language for political ends, see George Orwell's classic essay, "Politics and the English Language," *A Collection of Essays by George Orwell*, New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1946, pp. 156-71.

47. For an example of how editorial "instincts" influence the news, see Roger Morris, "Henry Kissinger and the Media: A Separate Peace," in Michael Emery and Ted Curtis Smythe, eds., *Readings in Mass Communications*. Dubuque: William C. Brown, pp. 164-66.

48. R.M., "Africa's Vengeance," *New Republic* 178, 25, June 24, 1978, pp. 6-8.

49. UPI. "Foreigners Held Captive by Rebel Forces in Zaire," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1978, Part I, p. 2.

50. UPI. "Zaire Drops Paratroopers Against Rebel Forces in Kolwezi," *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1978, Part I, p. 12.

51. TWS. "Successes Claimed for Both Sides in Invasion of Zaire," *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1978, Part I, p. 7.

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53. TWS. "Rebels Went on Rape, Killing Spree," *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1978, Part I, p. 1.

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59. Foisie, "Multinational Military," p. 1.

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62. Foisie, "Foreigners Freed," p. 1.

63. Foisie, Jack, "Remaining Rebel Resistance Cleared From Town of Kolwezi," *Los Angeles Times*, May 22, Part I, p. 1.

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65. Shuster and Schneidman, "Zaire Battlefront," p. 6.

66. Foisie, "Foreginers Freed," p. 1.

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68. TWS. "French Troops Try to Intercept Zaire Rebels to Free Hostages," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1978, Part I, p. 10.

69. TWS. "Zaire President Commutes Death Sentence Imposed on General," *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1978, Part I, p. 12.

70. Cuddy, Robert, "Los Angeles Times Coverage of the Angolan

Civil War." Filed as monograph in the African Studies Reading Room, Bunche Hall, University of California at Los Angeles.

71. TWS. "Zaire President Commutes," p. 12.

72. *Ibid.*

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74. O'Brien, *To Katanga*, p. 73.

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81. Thurber, Jon, "Invaders Mostly Exiled Tribesmen," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 1978, Part I, p. 10.

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114. Lamb, David, "Zaire's Patriotic Slogan Belied by Greed, Corruption, Misused Wealth and Poverty," *Los Angeles Times*, August 20, 1978, Part I, p. 18.

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116. Lamb, David, "Zaire Mine Reopening Baffles Experts," *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1978, Part III, p. 10. This was in the business section, lost to the general reader.

117. Lamb, "Intelligence About Cuba's Role," p. 5.

118. Lamb, " Zaire's Patriotic Slogans," p. 18.

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120. Chinua Achebe, Convocation Address given at the University of Prince Edward Island, May 9, 1976.

121. Segal, Aaron, "Africa and the United States Media," *Issue* VI, 2/3 (Summer/Fall 1976), p. 50.

122. Payne, William A, "American Press Coverage of Africa," *Africa Report* 11, 1 (January 1976), p. 46.

123. Hatchen, William A. *Muffled Drums*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1971, p. 93.

124. Liebling, A.J. *The Press*. New York: Ballantine, 1961, pp. 189-190.

125. For an interesting, though ethnocentric look at American socialization patterns in Africa, see David Lamb, "Africa No Idyll, Americans Find," *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 1978, Part I, p. 1. If the clannishness, narrowness, and self-pity Lamb describes among American expatriates in this article are common among the news representatives, it is no wonder news from Africa overlooks the African perspective.

126. Cuddy, Los Angeles Times Coverage of Angola.

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