

3

Colonial Invasion of Kigezi

I would like to remind His Majesty's Government that if our object in acquiring the Mfumbiro District is to obtain a route for the Cape to Cairo railway, it will be necessary to include within, a strip of the Rutshuru Valley, since the hills to the SE present an impassable barrier to the passage of a railway. The Belgian Post at Rutshuru will be untenable once the Mfumbiro District comes under us since all food supplies for their troops and employees are drawn from here (Officer Coote to Ag CS on 21 January 1910).

The question of why Africa became the target and victim of European capitalism in the last centuries has been addressed by a lot of scholars. The reasons lie in the desperate need for cheap and permanent sources of raw materials produced by cheap labour for the ever expanding European industries, markets for the European industrial products, places for re-investment of capital and re-exportation, and places for resettling its ever-increasing unemployed population. Cecil Rhodes succinctly explained to his journalist friend the European socio-economic crisis and its possibilities of transforming into a political crisis like the 1789 French revolution and the 1871 Paris Commune if the political class did not acquire colonies to provide material solutions for it.

The workers' consciousness had been raised through the study groups at their workplaces with the committed guidance of Marx and Engels. Through their historical-materialist understanding of human history from primitiveness

through slavery mode of production to feudalism and capitalism, they were able to understand the historical/revolutionary role of labour in European history. Their detailed discussion of the Manifesto of the Communist Party by Marx and Engels right from 1848 had enabled them to understand their historical *loci* and mission, and how they, as a class, were to quicken the demise of capitalism – whose mode of production was full of inherent contradictions. Their threats to capture power and control the means of production, make production decisions and begin production processes based on those decisions became a real threat to the politicians, the industrialists, the bankers, and so on (Marx and Engels 1969). Thus, Rhodes' prognosis and prescription:

I was in the East End of London yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for 'bread,' 'bread,' 'bread,' and on my way home I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism. ... My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, *i.e.*, in order to save the 40,000,000 inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced by them in the factories and mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is the bread and butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists - Lenin, 1986.

Ireland, - the I/C 4th Kings African Rifles (KAR) Commanding Kivu Mission Escort - reported from Ihanga to the Officer Commanding Troops, Uganda Protectorate on 26 November 1909 just as they were beginning to occupy the area - how they were reorganising the area administratively and taking over land to serve colonial interests and facilitate British capital penetration:

...some seven or eight villages have sprung up within the last six weeks near the British depot at Kumba. The villagers want land, and are natives from German territory. The political officer is most anxious to encourage these people. ...I am taking several of these natives to Lake Ingezi, at the political officer's request, to show them land north of the lake. They will cultivate and sow what the political officer tells them and sell their produce to passing convoys.

As full control of any market entails political control, the colonialists had to take political control of Africa - hence the inevitability of colonialism. The proponents of the dependency paradigm made a substantive contribution to this

aspect (Rodney, 1976; Amin, 1974 a,b, 1975, 1977; Lenin, 1986; Mamdani, 1996; Mukherjee, 1984; Davidson, 1992).

The political officer to the Chief Secretary explained in January 1910, why the three colonial powers struggled viciously amongst themselves and against the peasants for Kigezi (see quotation at the beginning of the current chapter).

The 1911 BCR noted that each collection of huts had its headman, although there was very slight social distinction between these and the common head. Baxter, Roscoe and Reid found that there were no local men of importance whose social horizon was larger than that of their own neighbourhood. To Reid, 'Rukiga is essentially a country of small independent clans acknowledging no paramount chief... no cohesion from a military point of view... most of the heads of clans are cattle owners on a small scale... essentially an unwarlike people and owing to the very local habits of the natives and the absolute lack of cohesion among the different clans, it is very difficult to conceive of any cause which would make the *Abakiga* combine.'

They viewed the inhabitants as a peaceful or politically docile people, posing no political threat to the advancing colonial mission; as lacking causes for going to war or for uniting them for war purposes. This reveals the underlying secret character of the Nyabingi Movement as a unifier. Yet, the colonialists in the subsequent records presented themselves as the victims of the Nyabingi Movement.

Indeed, in preparation for this war, the colonial authorities estimated in 1912 (*op. cit.*) that Rujumbura under Makobore could raise 5,000 fighters and Bufumbira under Nyindo could raise 1,000-2,000 fighters at short notice. What was to follow was a real surprise to them as the local people organised to defend and fight the colonial onslaught under the Nyabingi Movement.

Given that the GLR was not empty and the inhabitants were not objects of history, it is vital to understand the process through which it came under colonial rule, people's reactions to the invasion and the consequent imposition of political control over them from outside. While European missionaries were an important forward force in the colonisation of Africa, this was not the case in this region. What unfolded in the colonisation process was that this area was transformed into a theatre of vicious inter-imperialist struggles which nearly led to a grievous imperialist war on the one hand. On the other hand were anti-imperialist struggles which were to thrive in various forms until the end of the formal colonialism.

The first European parties to settle in the Kivu-Mulera region were Catholic Missionaries. While commenting on the journey with the White Catholic

Missionaries to Rwanda, Mukasa (1912) shows how Catholic Missionaries had penetrated this area, set up nine mission stations which were manned by many Catholic priests and brothers, had many Catholic converts, and had built very good churches of fired bricks and tiles.

The priests were resisted in various ways. Mulera peasants, led by Chiefs Lukarra, Mujaruhara and Manuka killed Fr. Loupias, the Father Superior of the French Catholic Mission on 1 April 1910. They fled the area. Chief Lukarra was given sanctuary by Chief Birahira while the others crossed to the British territory near Mt. Muhabura. The German authorities, headed by the Imperial Resident of Rwanda hunted Chief Lukarra down, captured him and imprisoned him. They, however, could not capture the other two who had left the German territory (The Political Officer, Kivu Mission writing to the Ag CS dated 9 April 1910; KD Report of 3 May 1912).

From Mukasa's account, the new church was already sowing seeds of hatred and enmity among the peasants. He explained that there was great hostility between the Catholic converts and the unconverted Africans whom he labelled 'pagans'. From his account, the unconverted had hated the Catholic priests right from the beginning and wanted to kill them. And the whole area was impenetrable and full of enemies of the European missionaries. By then, the indigenes had killed two White Catholic priests, one boy, three Catholic converts and had lost two pagans in one hour. Mukasa recounted how they crossed Bukamba from Rwaza with loaded guns. Failing to appreciate the importance of the resistance led him to condemn the resisters. His objective weakness stemmed from his conversion to Catholicism.

Modes of Defence

Although the whole region had not yet developed into state structures as it is today, still, the peoples had developed strong defence systems. The colonial officer, in planning reprisals on people in Kigezi, confessed how the colonial military forces could not risk attacking them head-on:

Military operations in this district would be extremely difficult, owing to the nature of the country and the natives could lay ambushes and escape to the hills where pursuit is useless. The seizure of the cattle and the occupation of the cultivated valleys would probably bring any particular clan to reason. Night operations, though attended by great difficulties, would be the only means of attaining the capture of any considerable body, as during the day time sentries are posted on all the hills and outflanking movements are doomed to failure (*op. cit.*)

However, the area was still at low levels of socio-political development. Defence was a collective responsibility of all members of the *enganda*. This was well captured by the 1911 BCR:

All able-bodied men are called upon to fight, and in such a case will wear charms, consisting small bucks horns, or small pieces of wood, round their necks. Such charms protect the wearer from death or wounds. Dances take place before the warriors set out for the scene of action and after their victorious return. Their arms are two spears, used either for throwing or stabbing, and bows and arrows. All the male prisoners are killed, and the dead have their hands and feet cut off; but women, and children who can march, are made captives... show great courage and do not hesitate to charge home in the face of rifle fire ...

The above narrative demonstrates a destructive form of war that led to the massacres of men. The decimated men would have given valuable labour as slaves. This reveals the low level of development of these people. Only men without disabilities had to go to war. The physical fitness becomes questionable when it came to being invaded. Secondly, such a luxury could be afforded only if the enemy was weak. The battle against *Ruyooka-Rwa-Maganya-ga-Nkundanya-Rukamba*, which is dealt with at length in the following paragraphs, brings out a contrary reality. Arming themselves with protective *engisha* reflected their strong religious beliefs. It also revealed their capacities to harness and synergize religious practices with their practical earthly and material needs and aspirations. In other words, they were able to invoke supernatural powers for their earthly requirements.

While the colonial record showed two spears as their main weapons, it was a cultural requirement for all men and male youth to have *engabo* for self-defence. Men would give endearing names to their *engabo* like *Rutangamyambi*, *Rutatiinamireego*, *Rugataanga*, and so on. The object was to exhibit the owner's bravery and instil bravery in the young ones. Describing the people as so courageous that they did not hesitate to attack rifle fire, the report revealed how the colonialists massacred them.

The report failed to explain that all the weapons, social constructions and military tactics were produced locally. Secondly, it left out the role of women, children, the disabled and the aged in actual combat. Women and children also participated in actual fighting. They equipped men with stones and in some cases, threw stones. They would shield themselves with *entara* (winnowing trays). In

other cases, they would use pestles or the men's weapons, lure enemies into traps, poison them, and so on. They also gathered information about enemies, and so on.

The Anglo-German-Belgian Struggles over the Great Lakes Region

There is need to review the sequence of earlier developments in the region before examining the final conflict, acrimonies and politics of manoeuvrability over the heart of the GLR. Belgium had the first stakes in this region and it communicated this to Bismarck of Germany on 8th August, 1884. Then, other agreements were concluded between Britain, Belgium and Germany over the demarcations of this region. These include the Berlin border of 1885, the Anglo-German Agreement of 1st July 1890 and an arrangement between Uganda Protectorate and the Belgian Congo on 12th May 1894. Then, an accord between England and the Independent State of Congo was concluded in April 1904 and it was followed by the convention of 1906. The Anglo-Congolese Commission followed in 1907-08. It was after those diplomatic and legal undertakings that Britain made territorial claims over Mount Mufumbiro territory in February 1907. Belgium used the former agreements to expose it and force it to retract its territorial ambitions for some time. England resurrected it on 10 October 1908 by writing a letter to Chevalier de Cuvelier expressing its intentions to annex the Mount Mufumbiro¹⁴ territory to its area of influence. It is on this background that the following developments were based. From Coote's letter of 21 November 1910 to CS, Britain's search for a route for the Cape to Cairo railway made it repudiate all earlier claims and agreements by Belgium and Germany over the territory.

Struggles over the GLR

The brutal exploitation and maltreatment coupled with the appalling working conditions gave rise to the mutiny of Baron Dhanis' Congolese army. This mutiny forced the Belgian officer, Captain Hecq and his 'loyal troops' to flee Uvira and seek refuge in the German territory - Rwanda. This created a power vacuum in the Kivu district, Congo. The Germans took advantage of this vacuum and occupied the area (sic!). This was explained in Ebermayer's presentation at 'the Conference Respecting the Anglo-German claims on the Eastern Frontiers of the Congo' which commenced on 8 February 1910; 'Boundaries: Uganda-Congo' and it was dated Brussels, 11 February 1910.

14 Bufumbiro was variably spelt as Mufumbiro, Mfumbiro and Ufumbiro.

The mutiny was defeated and the Belgian Captain Hecq managed to return. This resulted in the concluding of the Hecq-Bethe Treaty by Commandant Hecq and the German resident Herr Bethe. The Germans evacuated the area in 1898. This saga had also led to the Ebermayer-Beernaert Berlin Mission on the Ruzizi-Kivu district. This led to the concluding of the protocol of 10 April 1900, in which the Germans claimed as a right the frontier which it had earlier merely asked the Congo State to substitute for the old astronomical line of the declaration of 1885. This gradually led to the Dersch-Kant Agreement. This Protocol was signed at Brussels on 10 April 1900 by Auguste Beernaert on behalf of Belgium and Comte Frédéric Jean d'Alvensleben on behalf of Germany.

The report was that the Belgian government was actively re-enlisting men in *Boma*, and other centres where such men were working, and were forming a contingent of retired non-commissioned officers. These were to be armed with the efficient Mauser Rifles. The Belgians were also putting together several batteries of quick firing guns. The men were to leave shortly for Mfumbiro.

The British, on their arrival at the beginning of June 1909, found that the Belgians and Germans had already established their territorial imperial claims in the region. Cecil Rhodes' Cape-Cairo railway line dream was, therefore, bound to spark off serious protests.

In his communiqué to the District Officer, Kigezi, Olsen, the Commandant Supérieur of the territory of Ruzizi, Kivu protested vehemently against the British violation of the Belgian territory of Mfumbiro, and demanded for their immediate evacuation in conformity with the arrangement of 12 May 1894 between the Uganda Protectorate and the Belgian Congo on that region. He reminded the British that the arrangement had been determined by the Anglo-Congolese Commission in 1907-08 in line with the April 1904 Accord between England and the Independent State of Congo. Olsen on 2 July 1909 wrote to the Political Officer, Kigezi, on 'Violation de territoire par troupes anglaises'. This was in reply to Coote's letter of 26 June 1909 in which he claimed British ownership of Bufumbira.

Britain protested formally against the Belgian occupation of the Rubona post, following the withdrawal of British troops under Coote on 29 June 1909. Its defence was that its troops had merely withdrawn on the understanding that Captain Wangermée, le chef de Secteur de Rutshuru would not advance beyond the post he was occupying. Britain, therefore, pressed for the withdrawal of the Belgian troops from Rubona back to the posts which they had occupied at the time of the meeting between Cap. Wangermée and Coote.

Captaine Wangermée on 29 June 1909 replied from Rutshuru also complaining that the British violation of the Belgian frontiers and sovereignty had been sanctioned by the British Government.

He underlined how this was the first time since the Belgian occupation and control of this area that the British were making pretensions of claiming ownership of this territory. He, therefore, premised on this to dismiss the British claims of ownership of this territory contained in Coote's letter of 26 June 1909 as false and baseless.

Coote then wrote to Olsen on 2 July 1909 complaining and the latter replied on 12 July 1909 expressing great surprise at the British troops' violation of Belgian territory. He accused the British forces of violating with impunity the earlier concluded agreements by occupying the neutral strip, penetrating the Belgian territory and establishing camps at Mount Rubona and at Burunga. He argued against clearly manifested British intentions to occupy the Belgian territory of Mfumbiro:

You clearly penetrate into Belgian territory which you claim to administer in the name of the British government. ...the British government demonstrated its intention to occupy Ufumbira, a territory clearly Belgian (Sic) and administered by us since 10 years ago, it has been more loyal, in conformity with its use by addressing itself directly to the Belgian government in Brussels.¹¹ [See original text in French on page 97]

He turned down the British invitation for territorial discussions on the grounds that he did not have those powers. He underlined how his most imperial duty was to defend militarily to the end Belgian territorial rights and interests:

I personally have no mandate to conclude new arrangements with the British government. My mission is only limited to the defence of the rights acquired and the interests of my government, namely the maintenance of the respect for our boundary. This mission, of which I take full responsibility towards my government, constitutes for me the most imperial task and I will fulfil it to the end (*idem*).¹²

He also accused the British forces of menacing, killing, battering, bruising and imprisoning the natives in the Belgian territory. He accused them of beating and wounding 30 natives in Mushakamba's area, causing instability in the Belgian territory, killing an elephant in the Belgian territory and exporting its ivory. He accused the British authorities of sending armed soldiers to the areas of Lubona to force the indigenous people - Belgian subjects - to supply free food and of

threatening the Belgian soldiers by charging their arms on his arrival. He then based himself on this premise to explain how the Belgians had acted within their legitimate rights to arrest, disarm and detain two British soldiers because of their unbecoming activities and indiscipline.

He warned that if the British remained deaf to the ceaseless warnings, Britain would have to take responsibility for the actions which the Belgians regrettably would have to employ to force it to respect the Belgian territory:

I consider your movement in Belgian territory as a hostile action and I cannot, therefore, have no dealings with you as long as you find yourselves west of the neutral zone. If, despite the warnings which I am giving you, you maintain your occupation in a territory clearly Belgian, the British government will have to take full responsibility for the means which regrettably I will have to use to lead to respect the territory of the Belgian colony (*idem*).¹³

He expressed hope that the British would not cause regrettable incidents which would trouble the peace of the indigenous people (Sic!); ‘... *mais j’ose espérer ... que vous ne vous ferez pas l’ouvrier d’incidents regrettables et de nature à troubler la paix des populations indigènes* (Sic!).

He argued that the British violation of the border constituted the most serious affair which had ever happened at their border, and that it was a considerable attack on the rights of ‘sovereignty’ which Belgium exerted on the territories which the British forces under Coote had covered on orders from Britain.

He then thanked the British for evacuating the Belgian territory as the maintenance of their occupation would have inevitably led to very regrettable incidents and for which the British would have borne the heavy responsibility. He declared that he had severed all communication with the British authorities.

True to Olsen’s accusations, Coote succinctly confirmed this in his letter to the CS that he had been ordered ‘to occupy and administer the Mfumbiro District.’ (Coote to the CS, *op. cit.*) The British justified their primitive accumulation of wealth by arguing that the elephant was spoiling their water. They adamantly refused to refund the ivory. What needs to be clarified here is that neither the British nor the Belgians owned the elephant or its ivory. The reality was that this elephant, like all the other resources in the GLR, belonged to the indigenous inhabitants.

Olsen replied to Coote’s letter of 2 July 1909 defending the Belgian action of disarming and arresting the British *askaris* thus:

...the Belgian officer was acting out his absolute right by disarming and detaining, until receipt of the orders from his bosses, the two English soldiers and I would like to believe... that if I told you that these two English soldiers violated Belgian subjects by forcing them to bring to them aliments, and that in addition, they threatened a Belgian soldier by charging their weapons as he approached them, so that you agree with me that the Belgian officer was acting out a legitimate right.¹⁴

Earl Granville wrote to Davignon, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Bruxelles on 8 November 1909 against the arrest of the two soldiers, one Muganda headman and five porters whom he claimed had gone to purchase food from the area before rejoining the forces after the above-cited misunderstanding between the Belgian and British commanders. He argued that they were surprised by the Congolese troops under the command of a white officer, for they were all captured with the exception of one porter who escaped. The two soldiers were disarmed; the whole party was bound with ropes and imprisoned for a month. During that time, they were interrogated several times by the Congolese forces about the numbers of the British force.

Davignon, wrote to Granville, on 13 November 1909 explaining that neither Goffoel, the Commandant Supérieur, nor Olsen had any powers to enter into and/or conclude any agreement on behalf of Belgium as Coote had proposed.

He argued that the British authorities had punished these men for refusing to cooperate and show them where the Belgians were keeping cattle. He spiced this with the rhetoric that this property legitimately belonged to the peaceful inhabitants of the Bufumbira region, the Independent State, for whom the indemnities would have been claimed in favour of. He, therefore, demanded for the reciprocation of protestations or an impartial arbitration according to the existing rules in case other measures failed. He stated that the Belgian colonial administration had set up a commission of enquiry to investigate the accusations of Belgian brutalities, murders, injuries, imprisonment, and so on, on the peasants in Lukyéba village.

Davignon, officially accused Britain of its troops' acts of violence and looting which they committed during their first crossing in Mfumbiro. He argued that their commanding officer threatened the local population with corporal punishment if they remained loyal to the Belgian Government. He accused the British officer of handcuffing and imprisoning in his camp the subjects of Bende and Kibanza, and of tying to the gun the subjects of Chief Burunga. He also

accused them of raiding animals within the area of Chief Mushakamba, where the British authorities looted not less than thirty head of cattle as expressed in the following quote:

...demands and compensations for violence and pillage committed by British troops during their raid of Ufumbiro. The commanding officer then threatened the indigenes about the severe punishment they would endure should they remain loyal to the Belgian government.

He went so far as to put the sub-chiefs Bendee and Kibanza in irons inside his farm and gave order to tie some of chief Burunga's subjects to a canon. I'm not talking about the simple cattle raids. At chief Mushakamba's place alone, the English officials took away thirty cows.¹⁵

Belgium repudiated all the British claims over Bufumbira. Davignon wrote to the Baron Greindl on 19 July 1909 condemning the British violation of the Belgian territory, their establishing a camp on River Kigezi, in violation of the Clause of the General Berlin Act, which prescribed the use of mediation before arms. He reiterated that the Anglo-German arrangements of 1 July 1890 and 19 May 1909 did not attribute this territory to Britain.¹⁵

Von Schoen wrote to Baron Greindl on 30 July 1909 protesting against the Anglo-German Agreement of 19 May 1909 which divided its territory amongst Germany and Britain (see the map below). This 'Agreement Respecting the Boundary Between the North-Western Portion of German East Africa and Uganda' claimed to derive from the Agreements of 8 November 1884 and 1 July 1890 in which Germany ceded to Britain parts of Mfumbiro region which it held and Britain promised to make no further claims on Germany.

Belgium argued that one would severely judge the procedure which consisted in placing the great power brusquely face to face with the *fait accompli* of a treaty which was stripping Belgium of its property. Worse still, the two signatories had intentionally omitted Belgium's name and replaced it with that of the no-longer existent 'Independent State'. The British Foreign Office replied to these charges on 17 August 1909.

15 'Boundaries: Uganda - Congo'. Also see Olsen's letter to the Political Officer, Kigezi of 12 July 1909; and the Political Officer's communication to the Ag CS of 3 September 1909.

In his reply to the Count de Lalaing's letter of 8 July 1909 about the British occupation of Mfumbiro, Davignon pointed out that these developments indicated that the British occupation of Mfumbiro and the adjacent territories had been decided long before the British Government received the response from the Belgian Government and obviously, the Belgian rejection of the British claims on Mfumbiro did not have any influence on the negotiations which had already been finished weeks before. He accused the two contracting states of illegally and conspiratorially dispossessing Belgium of a territory which legally belonged to it (Sic!).

This issue was pursued further by the Count de Lalaing. He wrote to Sir E. Grey and gave historical details to show how the agreements of 1890 and 1894 did not grant Britain the sovereignty over Mfumbiro. He dismissed any pretensions that the recognition of the British sphere of influence in East Africa by the Independent State of the Congo in 1894 as described in the Anglo-German Agreement of 1 July 1890 could become a basis for British claims over Mfumbiro. He then exposed the British conspiracy in which it had solicited and obtained German recognition that Mfumbiro was a British territory. He argued that Germany had willingly consented to this because it did not occupy Mount Mfumbiro and also because it was granted a big compensation in Mount Kilimanjaro. When the Congolese Government had immediately exposed the British claims over Mfumbiro of February 1907, Britain had been forced to back off until 10 August 1908 when it resurrected the same demands through a letter to Chevalier de Cuvelier. This letter expressed England's intentions to annex to its area of influence the Mount Mfumbiro territory.

The Dispute Resolution Strategies

In dismissing the British ownership claims, Belgium insisted on arbitration for a peaceful resolution of this conflict as laid down in the Berlin Act and in the 1906 Convention. Aware of its limited military capacity, it emphasised how its neutrality, which was acquired from all the big powers, could not permit it to reduce the surface of its territory. Its position was that any change from this position would have to be according to the ruling for settling territorial disputes, which would have to proceed by means of exchanges. It spiced this with the colonial rhetoric of the white man's burden: that it had spent a lot of resources and human sacrifice struggling against the local barbarians (sic!). This in simple terms meant that the Belgian colonialists were facing serious anti-colonial resistances in the region.

The Belgian authorities explained how the British move since 1906 was aimed at guaranteeing the British interests for the construction of the railway line on the Nile, a promise which was still awaiting fulfilment. Belgium insisted that Britain had broken all the earlier accords because of its imperialist drive to construct the Cairo-Cape Railway line. ‘...une promesse de garantie d’intérêt pour la construction d’un chemin de fer au Nil - promesse qui attend encore sa réalisation.’ Belgium complained that Britain was pretending that the principal objective of the treaty of 1894 was to make the Independent State recognise the French zone in the Nile Basin, that the treaty questioned the border of 1885 while on the contrary it was consecrating them. It underlined the objectives of the Berlin Act as being to ensure peace between the whites within the Convention of the Basin, and to prohibit differential treatment of working towards civilisation. In the hope that the disagreements between whites would undermine their prestige in face of the blacks, it had been imposed within the Berlin Act that in case of serious disagreements, there should be recourse to mediation; and arbitration by advice:

The solution to the border difficulties resides in the Berlin Act whose triple objectives were to secure peace within among the whites in the conventional Basin, to prohibit favouritism, to open it up to civilisation (sic!). Knowing that disputes between the whites would compromise their prestige against the blacks, he imposed, in case of a grave disagreement, to resort to mediation and to advice the arbitration. It is from this council that the convention of 1906 was inspired, making arbitration an official matter.⁷⁶

As if zealously imbued to civilise the Africans, Belgium argued that for the whites to succeed in this difficult task of civilising the blacks (sic!), their governments had to undertake the obligation themselves, to make the blacks respect the treaties. This, therefore, demanded that the example of equity had to be more absolute. As such, one of their first responsibilities to make the blacks understand the good works of civilisation was to show to them this reality, this truth that was the basis of civilisation as it was practised by the whites and which was to be found in the respect of the rights for the weaker people or parties (sic!):

In order to succeed in the difficult task of civilizing the blacks, (sic!) the whites have the duty towards themselves and towards the blacks to respect the treaties, namely the Berlin Act, and display absolute equity. One of our first duties is to make the blacks understand the benefits of civilisation, and to bring in broad day light the truth according to

which respect to the rights of the weak (sic!) resides in this civilisation as practiced by the whites.¹⁷

It demanded that they had to respect the Belgian Constitution which stipulated that the limits of the states of its provinces and communes could not be changed or rectified unless it was based on the law. It emphasised that Article 68 forbade any cession, exchange, or adjudication of Belgian territory unless this was based on the Belgian law.

Belgium maintained its protest against the British occupation of Belgian territory on the River Kigezi, and against its establishing camps on River Kigezi, at 10 kms from the Belgian post of Muhavura,¹⁶ which was in gross violation of the clause of the General Act of Berlin, which prescribed the recourse to mediation before fighting. It dismissed the Anglo-German Agreements of 1 July 1890 and the 19 May 1909 as incompetent in depriving Belgium of its old territory and granting it to Britain. Belgium emphasised that it had not yet ceased to exercise police and administrative powers over its Mfumbiro territory for thirteen years (Davignon's communication of 13 November 1909).

Britain protested to Belgium against the brutality which the Belgian forces had meted on the indigenes. '...all natives who had helped the British force with food, supplies, information, & c., were being punished by Congolese officials, some having their cattle taken and others being imprisoned... 3rd July a party of Congolese soldiers visited the village of Lukyéba in the early morning; ... Buzukira and Yinanzizi, were wounded, ... Ninakazi was killed; a young girl of about 14 named Yingabiro, was captured and carried off with several men, women, and children; the others were all released after the men had been beaten, ... Yingabiro was taken to Rutshuru for immoral purposes (read 'rape').'

The Belgian version of this subject matter was that Yingabiro had gone to Rutshuru voluntarily and that the others had been wounded by arrows. Granville reported that the investigation by Coote and Captain Couche had revealed circumstantial evidence incriminating the Belgian soldiers. These included bullets and empty Albini cartridge cases at the scene of the crime. He concluded that this circumstantial evidence, coupled with the natives' massive evidence incriminated the Congolese soldiers. He, on behalf of the British Government, demanded for compensation from Congolese authorities to the natives who had been maltreated.

16 Muhavura is currently Mountain Muhabura.

Retribution Tools and Strategies Versus Rival Imperialist Powers and Local Agents

The foregoing incidents are a mere eye-opener to how the indigenous Africans suffered under colonialism - beating, imprisoning and/or killing; deprivation of means of livelihood including land, livestock and other movable property. In this particular case, both the Belgians and the British were culprits. At the same time, in the background was emerging a social group of collaborators, like Mushakamba, whose expectations for material rewards from the newly established colonial system were on the increase. The colonialists merely used them as pawns in the imperialist 'colony-chase-and-grab' game. They had invaded this area by force and in the process made the indigenous inhabitants the victims. They then used such cases to articulate their imperialist interests - on the diplomatic front to claim the territories, appearing to be articulating these indigenes interests; and on the local ground, posing as if they were very humanitarian and concerned about the indigenes' interests and well-being.

In his letter to the CS on 10 October 1909, Coote had reported once again how the '... natives of the Mfumbiro District were being forced to provide the Congolese troops with free food ... about one month ago the Belgian officer commenced making payments in beads for all food supplied, as also for portorage, the food however being as formerly levied forcibly.'

From this communication, Britain was claiming to be earning some acceptability by the inhabitants; 'The natives put this change down to our influence, it being opposed to the usual custom of the Congolese officials and to the principle which in the past has actuated their administration.'

He also reported that the peasants attributed the existence of order to the presence of the British troops in the Mfumbiro Valley. He argued that since the return of the British forces, the Congolese troops had been under far stricter supervision; the Congolese officers had displayed a more humane spirit of dealing with the natives as a result of which the property of the natives had been comparatively immune from spoliation. From his reporting, this was a major shift since the Congolese methods of administration and the behaviour of the Congolese troops in this area had formerly been very brutal and uncouth (Political Officer, Kigezi to the CS on 10 October 1909).

The Germans were not doing any better than the Belgians. This was revealed by both Coote and Ireland as they individually reported the counter-insurgency by the German forces. Germany had deployed a heavy force to punish the Bagesera

tribe occupying Bukonya district in the east of Lake Bulera. The Bagesera had resisted the German authorities. In this expedition, the German colonial forces had killed many peasants and looted over four hundred heads of cattle. Meanwhile, they were monitoring the movement of the Belgian forces in the *neighbourhood of Churuzi on L. Kivu along the strip in which the British were interested* (emphasis mine). (Ireland's Weekly Report to the Officer Commanding Troops of Uganda Protectorate, dated November 26, 1909).

The locals were not passive observers in this scramble for their territory. Some of the inhabitants of Ankore and Kigezi destroyed the British mail. The whole administration in the Western Province became greatly scared by the constant loss of all their mail. In October 1909 all the mail to Mbarara on the 9, 12, 15 and 16 of October 1909 were lost. While they feared that the resisters had destroyed all the contents of the mail bags, they were more scared that these resisters had understood the inter-imperialist contradictions and were trying to exacerbate it.

The locals had intercepted an urgent telegraph from the CS to Coote and maliciously rerouted it to the Belgian authorities at Kasindi Camp. Though Olsen had sent it to Coote unopened, Coote expressed his great fears that it was 'possible for urgent and confidential despatches from his Majesty's Government to fall into the hands of the Belgians...' (Coote to the Ag CS on 3 September 1909).

Coote's communication to the Acting Governor disclosed important developments in this inter-imperialist rivalry. The Belgians had brought specialists to construct the road connecting the Belgian ferry on L. Kivu with Rutshuru. It was to pass between the Namulagira and Niragongo Mountains, so as to obviate passing through the German territory (Coote to the Ag Governor Boyle on 19 November 1909). Coote's subsequent letter to the Ag Governor of 26 November 1909, reported that 'the Belgians, as a result of the German pressure, have retired to the south shore of Lake Kivu, evacuating the post at Churuzi, and withdrawing their working parties from that end of the road under construction from Lake Kivu to Rutshuru.'

He further reported great progress on the work of connecting the Belgian ferry on Lake Kivu with Rutshuru; and that the road, in view of German action, was to be diverted to avoid Churuzi by passing round the north end of Lake Kivu (Coote to the Ag Governor Boyle on 26 November 1909). He emphasised various important issues on the military activities in the region and revealed ways in which the local inhabitants were instrumental in the colonising process of Africa. The war was on.

Renewed Imperialist Rivalry and Clashes

Captain de C. Ireland's weekly report of late November 1909 to the Officer Commanding Troops of Uganda Protectorate Kivu Mission Escort reported new serious developments and activities within the Belgian Camp. He disclosed on 26 November 1909 that his local informant had faked illness and managed to accomplish his mission by pretending to sell fowls in the Belgian Camps. He however had been uncovered in the process and he had had to flee for his life. He further reported that the Germans had forced the Belgians to evacuate Churuzi Camp and that they would have to change the course of their road-making operations, wide of and west of the north-west corner of Lake Kivu (Report by Captain de C. Ireland at Ihunga, Kigezi to the Officer Commanding Troops of Uganda Protectorate, Kivu Mission Escort).

The Belgian Government had been unable to remunerate their askaris. To compensate them, the Belgian authorities had allowed them to loot villages of cattle and women, unrestrained. The indiscriminate looting and stealing helped to alienate the Belgians and their allies from the local population. In this respect de C. Ireland cited a case in which 15 Belgian *askaris* had deserted the Muhavura Camp on the same night, with their rifles and ammunition. They had moved eastwards towards L. Mulera, and then northeast, unpursued. He also reported that 31 *askaris* had died of dysentery in the previous few days.

The British took advantage of those weaknesses and overtook this territory from the Belgians. So, Belgian imperialism was weakened and undermined in the region.

The Belgians had a camp on Ngoma Hill on Lake Kivu Shore, near Kisenyi, which was occupied by one European and 24 men. These were prevented by the Germans from moving off their post. The Germans had withdrawn a large portion of their expeditionary force, leaving there nine German officers and 200 *askaris* at Kigombi. They had 50 German *askaris* at Kissenyi, and every *askari* kept his rifle all the time. The Belgians in Mfumbiro also let each *askari* keep his own rifle and 40 rounds of ammunition. This was a defensive measure against any surprise attacks.

The gravity of the Mfumbiro crisis caused the British Officer Commanding Troops, Uganda Protectorate to visit Bufumbira incognito. The purpose of his visit was mainly to study the situation and the terrain, and then make the necessary war preparations against the Belgians. The Acting Governor had to intervene to cancel the visit. He explained to the Colonial Office in England that he had

stopped it as it was ‘an inadvisable action, which was most likely to excite the Belgian mind if by any chance they should hear that the senior military officer in Uganda was present in the Mfumbiro district’. He wrote to the Earl of Crewe on 28 December 1909 and enclosed Ireland’s two letters of 15 November 1909 and of 26 December 1909.

It is not surprising that the British Consulate at *Boma*, Congo Independent State, communicated the following day alerting the British to prepare for the impending war. From his account, the Belgians were mobilising all their forces in the Lake Kivu District, in addition to some 2,000 troops already on the spot under Olsen’s command while Britain had 800 men. Instead of judging the situation squarely, critiquing the British role in the Mfumbiro, the British Consulate tried to absolve Britain of its crimes by transferring all the blame onto the Belgian Général Lantonnois, ‘whose prejudice is said to have conquered his better judgment’. He was overjoyed to report that the Belgian Government had rejected Général Lantonnois’s request to launch a war against the British forces in Mfumbiro.

Clearly, the Belgian Government adopted this position after judging that the obtaining situation was in their favour. The Belgian forces out-numbered the British forces by two and half to one. Belgium erroneously feared that a military action might prejudice its interests in the event of the anticipated arbitration. Obviously, Belgium knew its overall military and economic weaknesses vis-à-vis Britain and feared that such a war could be much more costly for it.

He reported a great excitement amongst the native troops about the imminent war between Belgians and the British. In his assessment, this conflict would be most unpopular with the natives and the troops. He argued that the Belgians were misinforming their troops that they were going to fight the Germans; and that ‘it was under this pretext that they had been persuaded to proceed to the Lake Kivu district’ (The British Consulate, *Boma*, Congo Independent State on the 27 November 1909). He further argued that the discovery of the truth by the Congolese had raised great discontent, which resulted into a plot among the soldiers in *Boma* to revolt against the Belgians. The Belgian authorities, however, discovered the plot and immediately suppressed it. While they had planned resistance against Belgian imperialism, their grievances arose from their relations with the Belgians; part of which had been highlighted by Coote and Ireland.

The British Consulate also castigated Commandant Olsen for stopping all communication with the officer in command of the British forces up to when all the British troops would have evacuated the Congo state towns. He revealed

the speculation that the three towns occupied by the British in Mfumbiro were endowed with gold. He hoped that Lantonnois' in-coming successor, '... would realise the danger of the opposing forces being encamped so near one another' and order Olsen to move the Belgian forces under his command back from the British forces. He also hoped that the new officer would be a little more conciliatory and cordial in his dealing with the British officer-in-command.

Coote informed the Ag CS on 9 April 1910 that the Belgian substitute had returned to the Muhavura and that he was expecting to hear from him in a few days time. Yet, the truth about the British plans had been revealed by Coote's letter to the CS in which he accepted Olsen's accusation; 'The orders I received authorised me to occupy and administer the Mfumbiro District.'

According to the consulate, the Belgians were afraid of attacking the British since they were aware that such a conflict would be the signal for a general local uprising in the Congo against them. To him, the Belgians could not rely on the loyalty of their troops; the existing situation of the Belgian troops where they were facing British troops was highly dangerous for the Belgians in particular; and for all Europeans in the Congo in general. (See the speech of British Consulate in Congo in 1909, already cited in Chapter One.)

The British Consulate's simplistic attribution of these soldiers' struggles to the mere affection of the British was aimed at glorifying the British authorities theoretically. This psychological selection of facts has the effect of hiding reality. It was erroneous. He aimed to project the British as the indigenes' saviour as if it was a logical consequence of Britain's historical mission.

Prelude to the Bifurcation of Kigezi

The British knew that the Belgians were weak militarily; their soldiers' morale low, and their notoriety and untold crimes and atrocities in the region had undermined and discredited them among the population. The British Consulate in Congo communicated all these and underscored the need for Britain to take advantage of the situation. He reported on 22 November 1909 how the discontent of Belgian *askaris* had led to an abortive plot.

While the Congolese nationals had excessive hatred for the Belgian colonialists, it did not follow logically that they had to consider Britain as the alternative or as their saviour. Other than Britain's intelligence claims, there is no evidence to authenticate its credibility. The British self-glorification was shattered, as the Congolese nationals resisted the Belgians and the British in various forms.

The Belgians and the British were edging towards war. They intensified their spying on each other and reported back home on their antagonists' troop movements, military capacities, the possibilities of war and the likely alliances in case of such an event.

According to a memorandum by the Director of Military operations of the British War Office to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the 9 December 1909 on 'Congo troops and the Mfumiro Boundary Question' military capacity and operations of the Belgians in this area, the Belgian garrison of the Rusisi-Kivu district had about 1,000 soldiers, of whom 550 were assembled in front of the British post at Kigezi, in Bufumbira District. Belgium had about 3,000 troops in that district. Although he was not sure of the exact figure, still he knew that '... in any case the Belgians could hardly denude of troops this long stretch of country which is inhabited by several wild tribes'. He reported Belgian reinforcements of 1,500 from Lisala and Irebu instructional camps. He submitted that despite the logistical and transport problems, the Belgians were in position to send a considerable force of up about 6,000 troops to Mfumiro since the Congolese forces were about 15,000 troops with an equal number of reserves.

After describing the weapons owned by the Belgian forces and their efficacy in case of war, he then went on to describe the soldiering qualities of the Belgian troops. The description of the Belgian weaponry gave a clear picture of Belgium's preparedness and also Britain's spying efficiency. From the report, the natives were armed with the Albin rifle, date 1867, and calibre .433. The European officers and the non-commissioned officers (N.C.Os) numbering about 700 men were armed with Mausers, 1899 pattern. Their artillery and machine guns consisted of: the Italian field and Krupp mountain guns, of calibre varying from 70 to 90 mm. It dismissed these as not suitable for combat due to transport problems. This also applied to the Bronze S.B. guns of British origin. Their Light Hotchkiss (37 mm) and Nordenfeldt (47 mm) guns were valued as the relevant weapons; the latter being the standard practical gun for field service in the Congo, as it could follow the infantry practically everywhere, mounted or dismounted. It had a calibre of 1.85 inches, with a total weight of 514 lbs, while the canon shell weighed 3.3 lbs and shot 4.4 lbs. The Belgians' other important practical gun was the Albin Maxim gun. This gun with tripod and shield weighed about 130 lbs.

After assessing the quality and effectiveness of the Belgian weapons and its military capacity in the region, the British Director of military operations then gave a detailed report on Belgium's military deployments and installations in the region from where the Belgian forces could easily procure reinforcements. As

an ardent British colonialist, he was scared of the Belgian forces whose fighting qualities he assumed to be good as they were recruited from the local warlike tribes (sic!). His consolation stemmed from the uncertainty of the loyalty of the colonised to the Belgian colonial service. From his submission, ‘...the Belgians are not loved by the natives and, therefore, they must retain considerable garrisons at their various posts. This fact and the difficulty of supplies... render it impossible to forestall what further reinforcements they are likely to send to the Mfumbiro district.’

To this memorandum was appended the hot news that he had just received a telegraph informing him of the arrival of more reinforcements of 2,000 Belgian troops at Kivu, while 100 more troops were on the way to join them.

Tension mounted as fears, rumours and speculations flew around. In mid-December 1909, Captain Ireland abandoned everything and concentrating on a rumour which had emerged from the Congo Boma to the British Secretary of State that Belgium had sent in reinforcements of 15,000 troops in Mfumbiro, he despatched immediate instructions to the Political Officer to send special scouts out to Ruzizi, on Lake Kivu. He also requested the officer commanding the Uganda Protectorate Troops to send scouts from Mbarara to Kasindi.

‘I have before reported the fear the Belgians had of collusion between the Germans and ourselves.’ He was of the view that these troops may have been sent to check on both the British and the German troops’ movements in the area.¹⁷

This region became a scene of great activity. The gravity of the situation was revealed in Coote’s detailed report about the Belgian military preparations for war. In addition to the four Belgian camps opposite the British post, they had built three other camps and posts at different points in the rear of their lines.

Olsen was clear enough in his last warning in his telegraph of 29 January 1910:

Last warning to Commander of British troops. By numerous letters I have informed you that I consider any forward movement of your troops tantamount to an attack on our position. My force, being then in the position of lawful defence, will open fire from now, and you will take on yourself alone and entirely the heavy responsibility of the armed conflict which you are provoking.¹⁸

17 Captain Ireland, commanding Kivu Mission Escort to the Officer Commanding Uganda Protectorate Troops, dated Lake Ruakatange 15 December 1909.

18 Telegraph from Olsen to Coote on 29th January 1910. It was forwarded to Ag Governor of the Uganda Protectorate, Boyle who also sent it to the Earl of Crewe.

Confronted by Olsen's telegraph on the imminent war, Britain tried various methods to avert it or at least to try to project Belgium as the aggressor. In pursuit of this objective, the Earl of Crewe ordered the British Colonial Office on 12 February 1910 to despatch all the correspondences on Mfumbiro to the Secretary, Sir E. Grey. Grey was then to inform the Belgian government immediately that the British forces in Mfumbiro had been ordered not to make any forward movement without instructions directly from London, and that Britain was interested in a peaceful settlement of this dispute from the on-going conference at Brussels.

On the practical side, Britain was busy preparing for the war. The Earl of Crewe clarified in his communication that Sir Grey could disclose to Belgium how Britain was very ready for war. It had 800 troops of the King's African Rifles at standby, had troops in the East Africa Protectorate. All these would be available for use in the Mfumbiro district should the Belgian officer provoke hostilities. Britain had also ordered a new 200-strong Indian contingent. This was proceeding from Bombay to Uganda in a few days. They would also retain in Uganda the Indian contingent already in Uganda, and would obtain further troops from Nyasaland. In his words, 'His Majesty's Government are, therefore, in a position to make prompt reprisals should the British force be attacked'.

It was with this bizarre and explosive background that a conference on the Uganda-Congo Boundary was convened on 8 February 1910. This was a conference which Britain manipulated and stage-managed to dispossess Belgium of its territorial claims in the Mfumbiro region. Might was proved right, which was contrary to Belgium's expectations of a rational and just arbitration. The first move to trap and bind Belgium to the proceedings of this conference was the election of Van den Heuvel as its Chairman.

The Belgian delegation was headed by M. Van den Heuvel, the German delegation by Herr Ebermayer, while Sir A. Hardinge headed the British delegation.¹⁹ At the conference, Belgium maintained its old claims since its communication to Bismarck on 8 August 1884 and denounced the May 1909 Anglo-Germany agreement. On its part, the German delegation castigated Belgium for failing to honour the Dersch-Kant Agreement. They then advanced that Germany had been confronted since March 1901 with the British claim to Mfumbiro, arising out of the Anglo-Congolese Agreement of the 12 May 1894; and the Anglo-German Agreement of 1 July 1894. They argued that the claim

19 Refer to communication from Sir A. Hardinge to Sir Edward Grey on 11 February 1910, on the Proceedings of 'the Conference Respecting the Anglo-German claims on the Eastern Frontiers of the Congo' which commenced on 8 February 1910.

had eventually been adjusted in the Anglo-German Agreement of the 19 May 1909, which Belgium had later on contested.

While the Belgian delegation stuck to its territorial claims based on the Declaration of Neutrality of 1885, the German delegation counteracted it by arguing that the declaration of neutrality could interpret, but not alter, the provisions of the earlier treaties respecting the frontier. They dismissed Belgium's claim of this territory as merely theoretical since it lacked effective occupation and administration there.

The Belgian delegation dismissed Germany's claims in the area prior to 1884-5 since she was not then a neighbour of the Congo State. They then showed how a German Captain Ramsay had nearly caused a war when he crossed into the Belgian colony and gave a German flag to a native chief, Kakali. The Congo Government's subsequent bitter protests had forced Germany to apologise to Belgium and withdraw their flag in March 1897.

Hardinge's disclosure of that day's proceedings revealed the character and magnitude of the British conspiracy and manoeuvrability in this inter-imperialist conflict. He had the German delegation that Britain was coming to their assistance, and went on to detail the tricks which they were to apply against Belgium. The British delegation met the German delegation secretly and charted out a strategy.

As Hardinge had underlined, Britain was the main beneficiary, since the German claims, as set forth in the Protocol of 10 April 1900, did not extend beyond a line drawn from the north of Lake Kivu to the intersection of the 30th meridian with parallel 1° 20' of south latitude, 'thus leaving a large part of the region ceded to us [the English] by Germany under the agreement of May last to the west of the frontier so far claimed by her as against the Congo state.'

The situation had to be resolved diplomatically or militarily. Events seemed to be leading to the war option. The British had deliberately created the trouble and continued to fuel it.

On their part, the British concealed their military strength and sophisticated weapons. Ireland explained the deception thus:

... I have sent specially selected and drilled escorts of Nubis with Magazine Lee-Enfield Rifles borrowed from Sikhs... By simple stratagems the Belgians are completely deceived as to our arms and numbers. On many occasions since June last armed collision with the Belgians has been imminent. On the 1st Mission I was twice waiting an attack with Magazines charged. On the 2nd Mission here

at KIGEZI, on several occasions both the British and Belgians have slept in their trenches. KIGEZI MUTESI, and MUHAVURA are all within a circle of 5 miles diameter.

He explained the objective weakness which Britain had studied and exploited. According to him, the commandant Supérieur of RUSISI²⁰-KIVU District, M. Olsen, was too weak a man to deal with. This was contrary to General Latenois, who had urged forcible measures. The Officer returned to Europe and was replaced by M. Fuchs. Ireland expressed ignorance of any knowledge about the new officer. He argued that:

In the event of the European Conference now being held ordering the British to retire I am of the opinion that an attack is very probable. All local natives and chiefs round Kigezi have notified their intention of retiring to British Territory with the Kivu Mission. They rightly consider their lives and property without British protection would not be worth a minute's purchase.

He requested for 300 rifles to guarantee the defence of Kigezi position, and requested for one Company, exclusive of the Mbarara garrison to be at standby ready to support the Mission. Thus, Britain was ready for war over the GLR.

The British interests were well defined in the secret Agreement between Britain and Germany. The border was fixed west of Lake Victoria, in accordance with the Treaty of 1 July 1890. They agreed that the territory formerly belonging to Ruanda Kingdom be given to German East Africa and any land that Britain lost in the process would be compensated by Germany with the same equal amount of land after the border had been demarcated. Secondly, the territory which was claimed as German territory under that agreement was transferred from Belgium to Germany. In return, Germany would cede to Britain the territory to the north and west of the border which they elaborately indicated on their maps. In exchange, Britain would cease its claims against Germany under Article 1 of the Treaty of 1 July 1890 between Britain and Germany.

The signatories to this agreement were: A.H. Hardinge, C.F. Close and John A.C. Tilley on behalf of Britain; Herr Ebermaier; Von Danckelman, and Kurt Freiherr V. Lersner on behalf of Germany.²¹ Thus, the Boundary Agreement

20 Rusisi is currently spelt as Ruzizi.

21 Agreement Between the British and German Governments of the 1/7/1890. Also see Extract from 'Minute 5 - Confidential S. M. P. 84/09 on 'Agreement Respecting the Boundary Between the Western Portion of East Africa and Uganda, Signed on 19/5/1909'.

of 19 May 1909 was nullified and a new team was constituted to demarcate a new international boundary, which would accommodate the new changes. It is noteworthy that the British interests were overriding in this transaction. This was because it was the most advanced imperialist power, with a long history of colonialism in Asia and America. It understood the tactics of luring other parties into its diplomatic traps and in the process, brings them into its services. In this particular case, it wanted to realise its Cairo-Cape railway dream.

On the other hand, the capitalisms in Germany and Belgium were still in their infancy and their imperialistic interests were not yet well defined, their wits were not yet well-sharpened. This disadvantaged them in their outlook, demands, negotiations and threats.

The Uganda-Congo Boundary Agreement Convention Between Belgium and Britain of 14 May 1910 was signed in Brussels by Arthur Hardinge, C. Close, John A.C. Tilley, on behalf of Britain; J. Van den Henvel, A. Van Maldeghen and Chev. Van der Elset on behalf of Belgium; Ebermaier, von Dankelman and Kurt Freiherr V. Lersner on behalf of Germany. Another Agreement was concluded on 26 August 1910 in Berlin between Britain and Germany. These culminated into the Anglo-German-Belgian Boundary Commission of 1911; Boundaries: Uganda - Congo; 'Instructions for the Fixed German - British - Boundary Commission', agreed to in Berlin on 26 August 1910.²² DC Mbarara wrote to the PCWP on 9 January 1912 on 'German - Boundary: New Territory, Ceremonial Transfers'. It showed that, he, with the Resident of Ruanda, Gudowius, and Captain Reid had completed constructing the boundary pillars. In his communication to the Director of Public Works, Entebbe dated 23 July 1912, replying the Director's letter of 23 May 1912 he detailed the boundary demarcation process and the fixing of the boundary pillars of both the Anglo-Belgian side, and the Anglo-German side.

The Fragmentation of Rukiga

Evidently, out of these political, military and diplomatic efforts emerged various agreements which in the end largely benefited Britain and Germany while also averting and postponing a war for three years. Britain signed a convention with Belgium and Germany on 14 May 1910 which differed from the earlier

22 See Kigezi Monthly Reports of 30 April 1911 and 9 June 1911 on the Border Settlement and the signing between the British and the Belgians; and the: 'Anglo-German-Belgian Boundary Commission. Anglo-German Boundary Sabinio to S.W. Source of Chizinga' - 'The Protocol in English' was signed on 30/10/1911 & the 'Anglo-German Boundary, Protocol' signed on 11/12/1911 (Kigezi Monthly Report of 30/1/1912).

astronomical-boundary line of the 30th meridian as it was based on the natural features. In a bid to foster their separate imperialist interests while also averting the war, another team assembled in Berlin from 23-26 August 1910 to discuss the details of the border demarcation in the Mfumbiro region of the Uganda, Congo and German East Africa frontiers.

The British delegation was composed of Colonel Close, Captain E. M. Jack and Count J. de Salis; the German delegation was composed of Baron von Danckelman, Captain von Marquardsen, Major Schlobach and Captain Fonck; while the Belgian delegation was composed of M. Ortis and Capitaine-Commandant Bastien. The air remained charged and the Belgians' suspicion of the other parties was most evident. The Belgian delegation rejected the proposal for the British Commissioner to visit Goma to examine the suitability of that port for the establishment of a commercial depot, on the ground that the selection of this depot lay with a commercial company and not with the British officials.

Finally, they agreed on the 'instructions for the mixed German-British-Belgian commission' on 26 August 1910. The English delegation was to comprise of Captain Jack, Captain Prittie, an officer in command of the escorts, a doctor and three non-commissioned officers. The German delegation was to comprise of Major Schlobach, Hauptmann Fonck and three non-commissioned officers while the Belgian delegation was to be composed of Capitaine-Commandant Bastien, and Capitaine J. G. Maury. The number of escorts was limited to 60 regular soldiers, while the natives employed could be armed with muzzle-loaders. All these were preparations against resistance from the indigenes. They established the terms and reference of this boundary commission, and guaranteed safe passage for the boundary-demarcating team within their spheres of jurisdiction. They also defined and harmonised the relationship between the commission's work and the earlier agreements.

It was further agreed that in case the Sultan (King) of Rwanda claimed the whole of the area which they clearly indicated on the map, then, the British-German frontier would follow another course, whereby Germany would have to cede to Britain some territory, which they also indicated on the map. The border was finally fixed based on the natural features - from the highest summit of Mount Sabinio (Sabinyo) to the summit of Nkabwe. The major work was concluded and signed on 4 May 1911. Captain Jack wrote to Fox on 5 May 1911 'En Route for Kiduha', notifying him that they had signed the Boundary Demarcation protocol the day before; described the boundary pillars marking their borders with the Germans and the Belgians.

This was a 'brotherly' way of settling imperialist disputes. There was a harmonious evacuation of stations and posts, and the removal of the flags and other emblems of sovereignty '... in such a way as to make clear to the natives the continuance of friendly relations between the two Governments'. This meant that they wanted to hide from the inhabitants the inter-imperialist contradictions which they were trying to resolve amicably.

Consequences of the Border Demarcation

In consonance with the colonial mission and tactics, the process of border demarcation (fragmentation) was unilaterally done by the imperialist powers without consulting the indigenous peoples. As the boundary demarcating process did not take into consideration the interests and rights of the indigenous peasants, it had far-reaching consequences for them. What should be noted is that all the boundaries were fixed based on the existing natural features and not on the pre-colonial political, social and cultural considerations - whether from the Sabinoy summit to the Lake Victoria or from the same summit to the Lake Albert. All that was said and enforced was that 'the native inhabitants of the territories assigned to either party who have hitherto been under the administration of the other party shall, for 6 months from the date of which this Agreement is executed on the spot, have the right of migrating with their movable property and flocks to the territory of the state to which they previously belonged. Those availing themselves to this right will be allowed liberty to harvest the crops standing at the time of their removal... with liberty to move with their portable property to the other side of the frontier for six months from the completion of the demarcation of the frontier on the spot and to harvest, even after the expiration of the six months, the crops standing at the time of their removal.

The agreement prohibited the local British authorities and the Boundary Commissioners from encouraging or forcing Chief Katareiha and his people to move into the British territory (Uganda). Obviously, the arbitrary and artificial demarcation and imposition of borders in the Kivu-Mulera-Ndorwa-Mpororo region was a milestone not only for the imperialists but also for the indigenous inhabitants.

At the height of the inter-imperialist struggle, the Belgian Soldiers had arrested the British forces at Rubona, and detained them for about a month before they escaped to Mbarara. The peasants paid the price for British invasion. The political officer complained to the Ag CS on 3 September 1909 of the invasion by Congolese forces in Mfumbiro. They had looted peasants' property, murdered;

wounded, abducted and raped six women, including Ginagabiro, whom they had taken to Rutshuru for over a month. They had also arrested and detained without any charge 8 men and subjected them to heavy punishment by flogging.

He pleaded that ‘...all sufferers are entitled to compensation and since all the above mentioned crimes were perpetrated as a direct result of our withdrawal from the country and were intended as petty acts of revenge on the part of the Belgian authorities...’ (Sic!) He also appealed to him to sanction ‘... the immediate compensation of these unfortunate natives; pending the result of official representations at home - since I despair of obtaining any satisfaction locally - it would not only have a most excellent effect in the district but would be a retributive act calculated to clear us of the moral responsibility which at present rests on us.’

He estimated the amount of compensation as nine head of cattle and some 150 sheep and goats. Political Officer Coote wrote to Ag Chief Secretary on 3 September 1909. The Ag Governor Alexander Boyle then communicated this case to the Earl of Crewe, K. G. on 4 October 1909, requesting for the sanction of a compensation of £60 to these inhabitants. He put across Coote’s suggestion of recovering this money from the Belgian Government. That was a long-term political investment in the local population. The charge was presented officially by Britain to Belgium in November, 1909. Granville wrote to Davignon on 8 November 1909 (*op. cit.*)

The defence for British colonialism was that the area was not civilly administered until 1912. The implication of that statement is that the area was pre-political, with a vacuum of leadership. That negated the existence of the inhabitants’ history and deprived them of any form of politics.

All the mistakes by the Belgians created a fertile ground for the experienced British to edge in and occupy the region, singing the rhetoric of liberation. Drawing from its past colonial experience and mistakes elsewhere, it adopted cunning tactics. This was in contrast to the crude, naked brutality and exploitative practices by Belgian and German colonialists. To this end, the Political Officer urged the British state to do justice by compensating the peasants. He underlined the urgency of appeasing the peasants by compensating them.

On 10 May 1910, Coote reported to the Ag C.S. that they had compensated the victims under their administration the sum of £34.17.8 of the original £60. He then appealed for more compensation of £25 for ‘... the natives around Rubona also suffered at the hands of Congolese officials though to a lesser degree, the reprisals in their case taking the form of fines inflicted on their chiefs

and headmen, who rendered us assistance...'²³ Although these did not affect its imperialist objectives, this approach made the British colonialists appear less dangerous than the others.

The Mpororo Kingdom of King Makobore²⁴ had been divided and sub-divided between the Belgians and the English. The part taken by the English was then sub-divided between Kigezi and Ankore Districts. This process was to later wipe out the ancient kingdom. Given its relationship with the British colonialists, the kingdom of Nkore was given more territory and peoples. The King of Nkore made claims to Mpororo Kingdom.²⁵ But this could not be done without any internal reactions.

As the border demarcation process unfolded, Makobore remained under the illusion that he was in control of his whole kingdom. So, his forces, under the command of his son crossed to the Mpororo part of Katana village, in Birua on the Congo side of the border. They injured people there, abducted twelve women, pillaged and looted property, and so on.

This act infuriated the Belgians and prompted L'Adjoint Supérieur to protest to the English Political officer in Kigezi in May 1911. He demanded for the arrest, trial and condemnation of these murderers under the English justice. He also demanded for the immediate return of the twelve abducted women to their husbands and parents. He appealed for rapid and just action as there could be among them some who were breastfeeding or nursing young children and whose prolonged absence could cause the death of the young ones. He also demanded for the return of the looted animals, and for the indemnity of six head of cattle for the murder of one of the inhabitants of that village.²⁶

The British authorities were not ignorant of the problem. In his reply, the British officer disclosed part of the problem; 'Birua, until cut off by the settlement of the Uganda-Congo frontier on the 10th May, was in Makoborri's country and nominally subject to him and Makoborri has not during the boundary dispute been subject to any control ...' (*idem*).

23 The Political Officer, Kigezi writing to Ag CS on 3 September 1909.

24 This name Makobore was variably written as Makaburri.

25 File: No. C 1040: The Omugabe of Ankole Claims Ruzumbura.

26 Ag Crown Advocate to the Political Officer, Kigezi on 7 July 1911. For details, see communications of 3 June 1911 and 20 June 1911; and File: 'Kigezi: Fighting by Natives: Sentences Passed on Natives of Makuburri's Country.'

The case was solved by punishing some of the culprits. The state charged the suspects with murder; convicted and sentenced Lutobera to six months imprisonment and Miwanda, Kiyikuru and Basomoka to three months' imprisonment each, at Mbarara. The colonial state embarked on a crusade of publicly depoliticising the peasants and threatening the local population, before finally crushing Makobore's powers.

There were also border clashes on the Uganda-Congo border. The peasants from Bufumbira, in the British colony, invaded and attacked the peasants on the Belgian side, near Bunagana. They destroyed and looted property and injured some people.²⁷

The colonial authorities from both sides were forced to meet and resolve the issue on 25 November 1922 and the ADC wrote to DC Kigezi about the 'Frontier Fighting near Bunagana'. The meeting was attended by the British authorities in Kigezi and the Belgian officials in the Congo, namely: Van de Ghinster, DC Kivu; Mr. Piquard, Administrateur Territorial, Rutshuru Territory and Rev. Father P. Van Hoef of White Fathers' Mission.

This intra-peasant struggle amongst the oppressed, colonised masses originated from a *shamba* - a piece of land on the Belgian side of the border. This piece of land was formerly owned by peasants that were thrown on the Ugandan side of the border through the border demarcation process. Their struggle for retention of both the ownership and user rights of this land developed into a 'sore point', which gradually developed into actual armed conflict. The fighting lasted three consecutive days, from 9 to 11 November, 1922. The peasants from the Ugandan side warned the Catholic priest, Father Piquard, that they would soon come and kill the Europeans. In this battle, they looted the peasants' property and the White Fathers' Chapel. In the process, the peasants from the Ugandan side sustained nine casualties, including two women. The casualties on the Congo side were also high.

The colonial state moved in to arrest the situation. While the peasants were getting out of control, the conflict was harming the Anglo-Belgian relations. The Kigezi district administration went on the offensive to depoliticise and threaten them against the use of force. In this bid, the D.C. went to Bufumbira and addressed two *baraazas* - public rallies at Mabungo and Kisolo. He warned the peasants against any further fighting and fined Nyarusiza Shs. 50/= which he used to compensate the White Fathers and the two *shamba* owners for their lost

27 DC to PCWP on 22 January 1923 and C.S. to PCWP on 16 April 1923.

property. The fine was to be paid before mid-December. Mutaganya's property had been assessed at Shs. 10/= but he received Shs. 5/=; and Ndeileme's property, which had been assessed at Shs. 12/= was compensated Shs. 6/=. Worse still, their *shambas* were taken over by the Belgian Congo. Interestingly, the British colonial authorities compensated the White Fathers Shs. 39/= (117 francs) for the damage (*idem*).

Imperial Victory over Local Patriotism

There was no broad, visible, organised political structure in the area, which British colonialism could manipulate to introduce, promote and protect British interests through its demagoguery of protectionism called 'Indirect Rule'. As such, it was forced to import wholesale a state apparatus and a train of administrators, soldiers, traders, and so on from Britain, Buganda, Ankore, Tanganyika and India. The dominance of agents from Buganda in the administration led to the establishment of a hybrid of a Kiganda-British form of administration, articulating British interests. The key sensitive jobs were combined and controlled by British personnel. This was due to lack of trained manpower, fear of administrative costs and mistrust of the colonised. Therefore, duties of conviction were fused with prosecution and execution under the same officers. This complicated the issue of impartiality, justice, mercy in the colonial system.

British colonialism used agents mainly from Buganda to invade, conquer, reorganise and administer the region. Buganda region had reached a higher level of state formation with a complex administrative system. Baganda had accepted to co-operate with British colonialism. This was in harmony with the colonial interests to preserve resources. Clearly, the choice of alien agents was quite appropriate. In addition to being of the same colour with the peasants in the region, Luganda language was nearer to the local ones and so was the culture, and so on. This made it easy for them to communicate the colonialists' wishes to the people. Baganda agents were used to implement unpopular, anti-people colonial policies. This helped to hide the real enemy. The oppressed saw Baganda, not British colonialism as the enemy.

Captain Brooks, in his Feb. 1912 report on 'Mahagi Military Garrison', drew some lessons from the military recruitment of Belgian troops from all sorts of tribes as the best method of obtaining efficiency and avoiding resistance. However, this was no sure guarantee against mutinies and desertions although it had the effect of minimising them. Notably, the administration of Kigezi District remained in the hands of British colonialism until independence.

The first people to resist colonial rule were peasants under Makobore. Colonialism saw these resisters as 'a mere curb on the advancement and progress of the district'. It resorted to its ploy of sympathising with one section of the peasants. It isolated the other section so as to lay the ground to attack it. It, therefore, took a pro-peasants stance, 'The peasants in this district appear to be greatly oppressed by the Bahima'. It is no wonder, therefore, that the ADC Mbarara led 30 policemen and crushed the resistance the following year.²⁸

One of the administrative solutions of 1913 was to divide the thickly populated area into Sazas and Gombololas with *Baganda* agents in charge and sub-gombololas with *Abakiga* in charge. It would divide the people and also train local people into manning the system. To colonialism, the crisis was that these people were '... addicted to excessive beer drinking and while under its influence, ... were very liable to be quarrelsome and use their spears instead of their fists'. It was confronted with Makobore whom it described as 'the most shifty and unreliable chief in Kigezi', because of his outright resistance to colonialism.

Another peasant resistance took place in Ankore, the neighbouring district with Rujumbura. The issue was over state exploitation through taxation and forced labour (*Ruharo*). A total of 132 peasants crossed into Kigezi. Seventy-seven of these crossed to Makobore's county while 55 crossed to Nyarushanje. The DC of Ankore complained about these matters to the DC Kigezi. The DC Kigezi, therefore, notified both Makobore and Agent Yowana Sebalijja that this promiscuous immigration was not allowed. He ordered them to make the necessary steps to return the people to their districts and also to warn them that they would not succeed in avoiding payment of their taxes (KDR of 8 April 1912).

As such, British colonialism depended on the skills, loyalty and initiative of Baganda agents. However, this led to abuse of office. The colonial state was forced to step in:

The powers of the Agents have been defined, and restricted, and only one case of anything in the shape of persistent extortion has been brought to my notice. As this was met by instant dismissal, there is an unlikelihood of any recrudescence (KDAR 1913-14).

The Colonial State had acknowledged the role of Baganda agents in the colony the previous year, thus:

28 WPAR 1913-14 and 1914-15.

The undoubted administrative gifts of the Baganda have been utilised in these districts by their employment as Government Agents to educate and supervise the local chiefs, a system which is open to obvious objections, but which in its ultimate results has been incontrovertibly successful. This method of administration is ... only tolerable under the closest supervision by District Officers.

The Uganda Protectorate Annual Report of 1912-13 noted how Kigezi had been ceded to the British under the Anglo-Belgian-German Boundary Convention of 1910.

However, when the differences between the colonised and the colonisers became antagonistic, the British officers came in as arbiters between the people and Baganda agents, laid the blame on Baganda agents and replaced them unceremoniously with local agents. The latter had learned from Baganda agents how to man this state machinery. On their part, Baganda agents had been under the illusion that they were expanding *Kiganda* political system and culture. This was subsequently shattered by the colonialists in response to armed struggles in the region. Others, like Sebalijja (1912), also believed that they were only spreading Christianity and civilisation to the 'primitive pagans and barbarians'.

Pursuance of the Military Option

Being still stateless, peasants had developed a complex defence system with codes. This was necessary for their defence against their surrounding enemies who included other *enganda*, the organised *Abatwa* bands and states like Rwanda and Mpororo.

In his report of March, 1912, Cap. Reid had identified two military problems of this area. One was of peasant resistance and the other of European hostilities. He argued that in dealing with the native problem, the population was 'practically entirely pagan and would therefore be unmoved by any wave of religious feeling which might affect Baganda or Ankole'. He showed the objective weakness of these peasants as lack of unity between Makobore's land – Mpororo Kingdom, Rukiga and British Rwanda which formed 'three entirely separate and distinct districts and it is difficult to conceive any cause which could unite the three'. Furthermore, they were unwarlike with no military organisation.

In Reid's account, the only anti-European tendencies had been due to the preaching of local witch-doctors and witches who practised the Nyabingi cult. To him, prompt police measures would suffice to nip this in the bud. He devised two major strategies in case of any insurgency. The first was to localise the disturbance

and if it was necessary to employ local levies; to use Makobore's people against the *Abakiga*, the *Abakiga* against the *Abanyarwanda*, and so on. The second one was to seize all cattle and stock (Cap. Reid's Report of 14 March 1912).

Resistance was imminent right from the start. The District Report of February 1911 warned of the need for a strong military force to suppress peasant resisters, who had made their country unsafe for unarmed persons (Kigezi Monthly Report of 4 February 1911). It was already clear to the colonialists that it was going to have a hard time of resistance in the region. The only way open for them was to seize the cattle and occupy the cultivated valleys.

This became the *modus operandi* of colonialism throughout the struggles that followed. One of the first cases in which they implemented this plan was with Lwantali and Bukola's cattle. The Political Officer led surprise attacks at dawn for two successive days; 'In both cases the natives endeavoured to drive the stock into the main Rukiga swamp on the edge of which the kraals were situated... some spears were thrown and it was necessary to fire a few rounds before natives retired... the swamp was entered and the cattle and goats collected...'

Under the Nyabingi Movement, the people waged armed resistance for over two and half decades. Peasant resistance took overt and covert forms. Some were militant, others passive; some took individual courses, others communal, and so on. Despite their differences, the three imperialist powers were forced to co-operate to fight the anti-imperialist Nyabingi Movement.

Original Texts in French

T1 ... vous pénétrez en territoire incontestablement Belge que vous prétendez administrer au nom du gouvernement Britannique.

... le gouvernement Britannique manifestait son intention d'occuper l'Ufumbira, territoire nettement Belge (Sic!) et administré par nous depuis plus de 10 ans, il a été plus loyal, plus conforme aux usages, de s'adresser directement au gouvernement Belge à Bruxelles.

T2 Je n'ai personnellement aucune qualité, pour conclure de nouveaux arrangements avec le gouvernement Britannique. Ma mission se borne à la défense des droits acquis et des intérêts des mon gouvernement et notamment de maintenir le respect de notre frontière. Cette mission dont j'assume l'entière responsabilité envers mon gouvernement, constitue pour moi la devoir le plus impérieux et je le remplirai jusqu'au bout (*idem.*)

T3 Je considère votre mouvement en territoire Belge comme une action hostile et je ne puis donc avoir aucune entrevue avec vous,

aussi longtemps que vous vous trouverez à l'Ouest de la bande neutre. Si malgré les avis que je vous donne vous maintenez votre occupation en territoire nettement Belge le gouvernement Britannique devra supporter le grande responsabilité des moyens qui bien à regret je devrai employer pour vous lamener au respect du territoire ressortissant à la colonie Belge (*idem.*)

T4 ... l'officier Belge est resté dans son plein droit, en désarmant et en détenant, jusqu'à réception d'ordres de ses chefs, les deux soldats anglais et j'aime à croire... que lorsque je vous aurai dit que ces deux soldats anglais ont violenté des sujets Belges en territoire Belge en forçant ceux à a leur apporter des vivres, que de plus, ils ont menacé une troupe Belge en chargeant leurs armes à l'approche de cette troupe, pour que vous reconnaissiez avec moi que l'officier Belge a usé d'un droit bien légitime.

T5 ...des réclamations à faire valoir et des indemnités à demander pour les actes de violence et de pillage commis par les troupes britanniques dans leur premier passage par l'Ufumbiro. C'est ainsi que l'officier qui les commandait a menacé les indigènes de cetttes région des châtiments les plus sévères s'ils restaient fidèles au Gouvernement belge.

Il a été jusq'à faire enchaîner dan son camp les souschefs Bendee et Kibanza, et il a donné l'order de lier à un canon des indigènes du chef Burunga. Je ne parle pas des raffles fu bétail. Chez le seul chef Mushakamba... les fonctionnaires anglais en ont enlevé trente têtes.

T6 C'est dans l'Acte de Berlin qu'est la solution des difficultés de frontière, dans cet Acte dont le triple but était d'assurer la paix entre les blancs dans le Bassin conventionnel, d'y interdire traitement différentiel, de l'ouvrir à la civilisation (Sic!) Dans la pensée que les discordes entre les blancs compromettent gravement leur prestige vis-à-vis des noirs, il a imposé, en cas de dissentiment grave, le recours à la médiation, et a conseillé l'arbitrage. C'est de ce conseil que s'est inspirée la convention de 1906 en donnant à l'arbitrage un caractère obligatoire.

T7 Pour réussi dans cette tâche difficile de civiliser les noirs, (Sic!) les gouvernements se doivent à eux-mêmes et doivent aux noirs le respect des traités, tels que l'Acte de Berlin, et l'exemple de l'équité la plus absolue. L'un de nos premiers devoirs pour faire comprendre aux noirs les bienfaits de la civilisation est de faire éclater à leurs yeux cette vérité, qu'à la base de cette civilisation telle qu'elle est pratiquée par les blancs se trouve le respect des droits des faibles (Sic!)

