

## *The Province of Zaire*

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1 In order to present the Zaire Province of the S.C.J. in its early preparation, in its birth and its development, it is first necessary to fall back on, especially for the first fifty years, to the history of the Stanley-Falls Mission and after, to the Vicariates and the dioceses of Kisangani and Wamba. Actually, during the first fifty years, the history of the Priests of the Sacred Heart who were working in Zaire - in those days the Belgian Congo - is immersed and confused with that of these two future dioceses. This is better understood by the fact that the Apostolic Vicars of Kisangani, up until March 1948, also had the task of Religious Superiors of the Missionaries.

2 A particular characteristic of the Zaire Province of S.C.J., I think the only one, should be made evident straight away.

3 At the beginning of July, 1977, the Province did not have one native of the country as a member; but was made up of fellow brethren from ten different nations: Belgium, Italy, Holland, Luxemburg, Poland, England, U.S.A., Germany, Canada and Austria. About fifteen members, old missionaries, have permanent residence outside the territory of the Province.

4 Lastly, a painful but glorious reality: four months after the foundation of the Province, twenty-seven members (a fifth of the effective forces were already inscribed in the obituary of the Congregation. In the two days following the massacres perpetrated by the Simba rebels, Zaire lost as many members as other provinces had done in twenty years.

5 It might be allowed that at the beginning of the presentation of our Province to remember the names of those whom, with their blood, have written the first pages of its history:

Mons. Joseph Wittebols,  
Fr Amour Aubert,  
Fr Charles Bellinckx,  
Fr Pierre v.d. Biggelaar,  
Fr Herman Bisschop,  
Bro. Damien Brabers,

Fr Clement Bumotte,  
Fr Joseph Conrad,  
Fr Henri Hams,  
Fr Leonard Janssen,  
Bro. Joseph Laureys,  
Fr A. Bernardo Longo,  
Fr Jacques Moreau,  
Fr Gerard Nieuwkamp,  
Bro. Joseph Paps,  
Fr Arnold Schouenberg,  
Bro. Wilhelmus Schouenberg,  
Fr Jean Slenter,  
Fr Joseph Tegels (Murdered 14-2-61).  
Fr François Ten Bosch,  
Fr Jean Trausch,  
Fr Christian Vandael,  
Fr Jerome Vandemoere,  
Bro. Henri Vanderbeek,  
Fr Henri v.d. Vegt,  
Fr Henri Verberne,  
Fr Guillaume Vranken,  
Fr Jean De Vries.

## I. THE MISSION AND THE VICARIATE OF STANLEY-FALL

### 1. The Foundation

**6** On the 25<sup>th</sup> March 1897, Rome entrusted the Stanley-Falls Mission to the Priests of the Sacred Heart. The document of acceptance of this mission in the Independent State of the Congo was signed by Fr Dehon himself. This territory with the capital of Stanleyville (today Kisangani) was made up of the basins of Lualaba, of Aruwimi, of Lindi and the beginning of the slopes of Ruwenzori: an immense region practically unexplored, (600 km from North to South and 850 km from East to West as the crow flies).

**7** Fathers Gabriel Grison and Gabriel Lux, expelled from Ecuador by the masonic revolution, accepted enthusiastically, the task of founding a new mission in the heart of Africa. On the 6<sup>th</sup> July 1897 they embarked at Anvers aboard the “Albertville” and arrived at Stanley-Falls on 21<sup>st</sup> September.

**8** “Stanley-Falls”, wrote Fr Grison, “is one of the most beautiful parts of Equatorial Africa, a virgin land, inhabited by an interesting and intelligent population. We consecrated ourselves, heart and soul to this new mission, which is under the protection of the Blessed Virgin”.

**9** Work was immediately undertaken. As resulted from a letter written to Fr Dehon, on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1897 (ten days after the arrival at the Falls), the land was chosen for the first mission, 6 km from the Capital in order not to remain too distant from the State offices: the means necessary for the health, the constructions, and methods of communication advised this nearness despite the warnings of Mons. Van Ronslé, Apostolic vicar of the Independent State of the Congo, resident at Boma and on whom depended the new mission. Right from the first days, Fr Grison brought up the question of the necessity" of asking for our independence as soon as possible. The first workers are like the... Wagenia. In November, 130 workers, led by a sub officer, helped the Fathers in their work of clearing the forests and constructing the first provisional houses..

**10** Unfortunately, the climate is deadly, the tropical illnesses numerous, and the means of defence, derisive. On the 17<sup>th</sup> October, just two months after his arrival, Fr Lux had to return urgently to Europe, prostrate with tropical fever. Left on his own, Fr Grison courageously continued with the material work, making contact with the neighbouring population, making the first reconnaissance of the forest and starting to catechize the children... but there is the problem of the language! "I have become aware that I am unable to speak the language", he wrote to Fr Dehon, the 16<sup>th</sup> November.

**11** On the 25<sup>th</sup> December, the first Mission of the Falls was officially inaugurated with the name of St. Gabriel. On Christmas Eve of 1897 the mass was celebrated for the first time on the banks of the Upper Congo. The same Fr Grison described that event: "As soon as everybody had arrived I started Midnight Mass, always a poetic happening, but so solemn at that place, in the middle of that forest and in front of that assembly. Five whites representing fourteen centuries of civilization, and the negroes of long dark periods. But their coming towards and their presence in front of the altar of the Child Jesus was a sign of the times. One of the whites had brought with him an accordion. Those lovely old Christmas tunes filled my small, poor chapel. The whites,, moved by memories of their distant lands, listened thoughtfully; the negroes staring, not knowing what to think: I, I was thinking for them".

**12** After the departure of his colleague, Fr Grison found himself alone in those surroundings, alone in a territory of 270,000 Km, alone in a region never reconciled because of the war against the Arabs, who dealt in slaves, where the malarial fever, dysentery, haematuria, smallpox and sleeping sickness caused havoc among the population, which had no means of protection.

**13** "We have an immense field, wrote the Father at the beginning of December 1897, a hundred missionaries would not be sufficient for this immense territory of the Falls which extends from Lomami and Aruwimi to the big lakes of the East and Tanganika. Probably the climate will soon claim

some victims. This, however, gives more sense to those who have a real vocation. It is wonderful to die for the cause of the gospel at the outposts of Christianity”.

**14** On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1898, Fr Grison opened a school, starting with four pupils, and on 25<sup>th</sup> March of the same year baptized the first two children.

**15** On 11<sup>th</sup> May the first reinforcements arrived: Fr Willibrord Reelick, Fr Bonifatius Winz and Bro. Bonaventura Henning; all three had been missionaries in Ecuador, Fr Bonifatius and Bro. Bonaventura died the following year.

**16** At the end of December 1898, Fr Grison returned to Europe to explain the problems, to stimulate missionary vocations and to undertake trips in order to recruit nuns for his mission.

## **2. The Early Developments**

**17** During the absence of Fr Grison, recruiting in Europe, Mons. Van Ronslé made his first visit to Saint Gabriel; it was 11<sup>th</sup> June 1899, feast of the Sacred Heart. The Bishop was very impressed by the immense difficulties which the missionaries came into contact with. It was only a small group, and half of them died before the end of the year. On the 27<sup>th</sup> October, Fr Grison re-entered from the Congo accompanied by Fr Tillmann and by Brothers Frederic Van Winden and Vitus Berlings.

**18** The moment had come to leave Saint Gabriel. On 21<sup>st</sup> December, 1899, Fr Willibrord Reelick moved to “the right side” of Stanleyville, a small but important State base garrisoned by six europeans and a few hundred soldiers, among whom were the first candidates for baptism. An elderly missionary, about fifty years old, ex-pontifical zouave, who was to become during the next 23 years the friend, confident and right hand of Mons. Grison. The provisional church which he constructed was to serve the cult up until 1913, the year in which the cathedral was inaugurated. The end of the century brought two things to Saint Gabriel; one sad: on 31<sup>st</sup> January a cyclone hit a large part of the mission construction; and one happy: the arrival on the 21<sup>st</sup> August, 1900, of six “Franciscan Missionary of Mary Sisters”.

**19** At the beginning of the new century, in 1901, the State recognized the Congolese missions of the Congregation, juridically, and granted them 400 hectare of land at St. Gabriel. In September of the same year, Fr Grison made an inspection tour right to the Aruwimi river. Thus Fr M. Goerke, a german missionary, was established at Basoko on 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1902. The locality was of a certain importance; it was the capital of the district, it is where the Aruwimi joins the Congo, and, at the same time, a stronghold, destined to close the road of the slave traders who constantly threatened Stanleyville

until 1908. In that mission worked Fr Joseph Frassle, well-known for his psychological studies of the Negro.

**20** During the same epoch, on the banks of the Congo river, the Romee-Yanonge mission was founded by Fr Lorence Wulfers. 200 km east of Basoko where the ground for evangelizing had already been prepared by some Christians from Romee, Fathers John Henz and David Steinmetz constructed the mission of Banalia starting 7<sup>th</sup> July, 1903.

**21** In order to connect the territory of the Falls of the Congo river between Stanleyville and Ponthierville (now Ubundu), the State had constructed railway lines. On the 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1903, Fr P. Slangen was nominated chaplain of the railway personnel of the Large Lake Railways (CFL). In order to stay near his faithful, Father Slangen went to live on the Rive Gauche and officially began the Stan R.G. Post.

**22** Moving continually eastwards on the Aruwimi, Fathers Leonard Massmann and Lorence Wulfers founded the mission of Avakubi on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1904. At this time Fr Grison gave the victory cry of: "All the Aruwimi (Basoko, Banalia, Avakubi) is ours!"

**23** In recognition of all the work done in seven years, the territory of the mission was raised to an apostolic prefecture, and Fr Grison was nominated Prefect Apostolic on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, 1904.

**24** In 1905, Mons. Grison undertook a long journey across all the prefecture; a march on foot along a desert track which lasted two months and brought him to Beni, 700 km from departure point to the slopes of the Ruwenzori! There awaited him Fathers L. Farinelle and F. Germain who had come from Belgium to arrive at Beni after having passed via Mombasa on the Indian Ocean. The two missionaries founded the mission of Beni in 1906.

**25** This post which was inaccessible and distant from the centre was always to be a headache for the Monsignor. After this journey of nine months, the Prefect Apostolic felt very tired and a little depressed. In a letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> May, 1907 addressed to Fr Dehon he asked to be relieved of his duties and substituted by Fr Farinelle; he complained that in Europe *they thought of him as a savage!*

**26** However, under the strong will of Mons. Grison, the work continued. After the West, the North and the East, the missionary efforts were turned to the South. On the 14<sup>th</sup> December 1907 the mission of Lokandu (350 km south of Kisangani) was founded by Fr Cornelius Mulder.

**27** In 1908 a very important fact happened: with the Brief of the S.C. for Propagation dated 12<sup>th</sup> March, the Prefecture was raised to an Apostolic Vicariate, and entrusted to Mons. Grison who received the episcopal consecration in Rome on 11<sup>th</sup> October of the same year from the hands of H.E. Cardinal Gotti. The following year, Rome modified the borders of the

Vicariate, yielding some of the territory of the North to the Prefecture of Uele which later was to become the Vicariate of Buta (6.V.1909).

**28** At Kisangani, the serious problem of the education and instruction, especially of the young, was posed: Mons. Grison was happy to receive on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 1911, the first Marist Brethren, who assumed all the official schools for boys in the city.

**29** From Rive Gauche, the CFL chaplain goes as far as Ponthierville (present-day Ubundu). On December 15, 1912, Fr. Slangen will officially erect a mission post there. Even before the war, the German Fathers Ludwig Kuck and Joseph Haurand went more than 400 km northeast of Kisangani to found the post of Bafwabaka. This foundation will become the mother-mission of the entire Népoko region, the current diocese of Wamba

**30** In passing, we note that from Easter 1913, the Cathedral of Kisangani started to function after the building had just been completed after five years of construction; however, the building has never been consecrated. Indeed, the seat of the Vicariate was not definitively established at Stanleyville (Kisangani) until 1936.

**31** When war broke out in 1914, Mons. Grison was in Europe, but despite everything he obtained permission to return to Africa, thanks to the intervention of the Nuncio at Bruxelles. He returned in the company of Fathers Leo Cambron and Leo Debouge and of Bro. M. Hebermehl: this was in 1915.

**32** Looking back over these 17 years, we must admit that the achievements reached were enormous, and had called for sacrifices, toil and lives. Of the 72 missionaries who had arrived since the beginning, 26 were still there in 1915, 18 of them had died one by one soon after their arrival; two died on the voyage there and another was sent back with typhoid three days after his arrival at St. Gabriel.

**33** The worry of Monsignor Grison for the lack of personnel and his constant appeals for help are well understandable. Here is some idea.

**34** “Before starting new missions (Sumatra), send us personnel!” (to Fr Dehon, 21.3.1911).

**35** “Before creating the Dutch Province, send some people to us!” (9.5.1911).

**36** “Why open new homes and then leave us without personnel?” (7.6.1911). “As no priests are available then send us students!”

**37** “It was not I who abandoned the Irumu, but the Congregation; we have no personnel!” (21.10.1913).

**38** “The heads of the Congregation should come here, then they would understand “(3.10.1913).

**39** There were to be more than a hundred of such similar appeals during the course of 37 years in the letters sent to the Father Founder and his successors.

### **3. After the First World War**

**40** During the war, six french missionaries were called to the army; after the war several german priests were asked to leave the country; other french missionaries were transferred to the Cameroun... which seriously stripped the ranks and obviously impeded the foundation of new posts. Fortunately some missions were not altogether suppressed, which meant an enormous increase in work for all.

**41** Everybody, more or less, had a right to be on leave in Europe.

**42** To reply to this pressing appeal of Pope Benedict XV, Mons. Grison opened, on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1920 at Bafwabaka, a minor seminary, entrusting the direction to Fr Joseph Haurand. He was a priest of outstanding piety, of great learning who had unlimited faith in his Negro boys. He has left the print of his strong personality on the seminary, and he is well remembered among all the elderly members. For 50 years he worked courageously in the African land which he loved. In 1933 the Minor Seminary was transferred to Kisangani.

**43** At the same time it was necessary to continue to occupy the land in the vast region of the Falls. In 1924, at north east of Basoko, a missionary post was founded called Mokaria, and on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1926 the one at Panga on the upper Aruwimi was started.

**44** To the east in the region of Kivu, the post of Beni was not sufficient for all the population of that area, and therefore in 1925, Fr Cambron founded the mission of Lubero.

**45** Among other things, the first synod of Kisangani, in 1922, and the Fifth Plenary Conference of Bishops and Superiors (held at Kisangani in 1923) dealt with the necessity of being helped by other Missionary Orders. Thus on 14<sup>th</sup> October, 1929, Beni and Lubero were entrusted to the Assumptionist Fathers; on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 1934 Beni became a sui juris mission, and on 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1938, the territory was raised to an Apostolic Vicariate, of which Mons. Piérard became the first Bishop. As it was, on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1922, we had handed over to the White Fathers a part of our immense Vicariate, that of the North-East region.

**46** After 1918, Mons. Grison frequently asked Fr Dehon and his successor to dispense him of his tasks as Pastor. In 1933 when, he celebrated his double jubilee, fifty years as a priest and twenty-five as a bishop, his request was finally accepted. The pioneer was 73 years old. His last years were dedicated to the Normal School of St. Gabriel; and he was to die in his dear mission of St. Gabriel on the 13<sup>th</sup> February of 1942, at the age of 81. His body reposes in front of the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, right at the entrance where, on Christmas night of 1897, he celebrated for the first time on african land, the Eucharist.

47 Fr C. Verfaillie, who after the death of Fr Reelick (10<sup>th</sup> June, 1931) carried out the functions of pro-vicar, was nominated successor to Mons. Grison. He was consecrated at Bruxelles on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1934.

#### 4. The Great Expansion

48 In order to help the evangelization of this large Vicariate, and ease the organisation and apostolate, two rather administrative and juridical measures were taken. On 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1935, the borders of the Vicariate were changed in order to give some land to the Vicariate of Niangara. Following, at the beginning of 1936, the seat of our ecclesiastical constituency was definitively established at Stanleyville (Kisangani).

49 Between 1920 and 1940, the missionary personnel reached an important number, which is doubtful they will ever reach again. During these twenty years, 99 missionaries, brothers and fathers disembarked to reach our mission of the Congo (Zaire).

50 Thus it was decided to transform secondary posts into permanent missions which were visited frequently enough by missionaries with given itineraries.

51 In this way, in 1936, there were a *series* of foundations.

- On 15<sup>th</sup> March, Fr Diemeer officially started the mission of Lubutu.
- On 10<sup>th</sup> April, it was the turn of Bengamisa, founded by Fr Joseph Keup.
- On the same day, Fr Antony Marvee remained at Yangambi, not far from INEAC, an institute of agricultural research.
- On the first of August of the same year, Maboma became an independent missionary post with Fathers Kawaters and Huitink.
- On 15<sup>th</sup> August, Father Leonard De Jaegar was established “definitely” at Lowa in the middle of Mituku.
- On 19<sup>th</sup> November, along the long road which goes from Kisangani to Avakubi, Fr Christen founded a missionary post at Batama.
- On 15<sup>th</sup> December, Fr Nol de Leest went to live at an important locality of Nepoko, Wamba, the future site of the Diocese of the same name.
- On 25<sup>th</sup> October - still in 1936 - the Lateran Canons founded a post at Punia.

52 The following two years were characterized by two happenings which were like rails towards the final objective of the mission, as reaching *in spe* of the evangelizing missionary aims. In fact on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1937, the “Native Order of the Holy-Family” (Jamaa-Takatifu) was canonically erected at Bafwabaka by Monsignor Verfaillie; the foundations were laid six years

previously by Mons. Grison. In the early days the training of the religious was entrusted to the Sisters of the Child Jesus of Nivelles.

**53** On the 15<sup>th</sup> October, 1938, Mons. Grison proceeded, at Kisangani, *with the ordination of the first native priest* of our Vicariate, Fr John Agwala.

**54** The pamphlet *Sint Unum* echoed the joy provoked by this happening among the students of Louvain: “15<sup>th</sup> October 1938... a day of happiness at Stanleyville; a day of triumph when the first pioneer of the Falls consecrates to priesthood the first son of the Vicariate. The whole order rejoices, gloriously conscious of having finally doubled in the Congo a cape so longed for after 40 years...”. Since that day, twenty-five other old students of the minor Seminary of Kisangani have been ordained priests, among them the now archbishop and bishop of Kisangani and Wamba.

**55** On the eve of the second world war. Fr Wittebols, future bishop of Wamba, started a college of Europeans; and from 1957, the institution became interracial and after independence reached 600 pupils. In that same year, 1939, Fr Cambron and Bro. Boniface Kawaters founded the mission of Ibambi, in the future diocese of Wamba.

**56** In the meantime a new war had broken out in Europe. The communications with Europe were cut, and help no longer arrived. It became impossible to initiate the foundation of new posts. Each mission had to look after itself. For these reasons, more than one post had an unused look about it. Here a torch of palm oil was made, there a coffee plantation was initiated, elsewhere the extraction of rubber was started... and life goes on.

**57** Consequently, as time went by, each mission reached a major independence than it had in the past... (“Jeune Eglise au Zaïre”, in *Heimat und Mission*, November, 1972).

**58** After the war, it was not necessary to wait for the reinforcements of missionaries: between 18<sup>th</sup> May, 1945 and 6<sup>th</sup> December 1947, there were 43 First postings of Brothers and Fathers of our Congregation towards the missions of the Congo. Thus in January 1945, the mission of Pawa was able to be founded, always in the north-east region, where one of the principal leper colonies of the Congo there is. Here and there around this, with the help of the missionaries, new elementary schools, technical and high schools a rose.

**59** At this point in the story (half a century) of the missionary activity of our Congregation in Zaïre, it is our duty to remember the other religious Orders of Brothers and Sisters who greatly helped us in our apostolic work. We have already spoken of the arrival at Kisangani in 1900 of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary who went to the Rive Gauche and Basoko. We have also mentioned the Marist Brothers' arrival at the beginning of 1911. It is necessary to mention others: Sisters of the Child of Nivelles, who arrived on 18<sup>th</sup> November, 1930; the Sisters of St. Vincent of Gits who arrived on

29<sup>th</sup> September, 1933; the Sisters of St. Elizabeth of Luxembourg who came on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1939; the Sisters of Christian Doctrine, the first contingent arriving on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1949; the Sisters of the Ni-grizia, who entered the Vicariate of Wamba in 1952; in 1972 they passed over to the Minor Seminary of Kisangani; the Dominicans of the SS Rosary arrived at the Vicariate of Wamba in 1952, and then they also passed on to Kisangani in 1960; the Sisters of St. Vincent of Kortemark arrived at Kisangani on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1956; the Sisters of the Adoration of the Most Precious Blood, who came on 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1955.

**60** We have already made reference to the Jamaa Takatifu (Holy Family) Sisters, employed in the Diocese of Kisangani and Wamba. All these Orders, in collaboration with our missionaries were occupied and are still occupied (except for four, who left after the revolution) with the education, instruction and training of youth. The members of the female Orders have the tasks of the hospitals, dispensaries, maternity homes, orphanages and leper colonies.

**61** Seven of the Orders have paid a heavy tribute to the revolution: 20 sisters died a violent death: seven sisters of the Christian Doctrine, three Sisters of St. Elizabeth, two Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, four Dominicans of the SS Rosary, three Sisters of St. Vincent of Gits, a sister of the Holy Family and two Marist Brothers.

## II. THE TWO VICARIATES AND DIOCESES OF KISANGANI AND WAMBA

**62** On the 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1949, always keeping in mind a major efficiency in apostolic works, Rome separated from the Vicariate of Stanley-Falls (which from then on was to be called the Vicariate of Stanleyville), all the region of the territory of Wamba and of Kibali-Ituri (Nduye and Mambasa) to constitute the Apostolic Vicariate of Wamba.

### 1. Vicariate (Archdiocese) of Stanleyville (Kisangani)

**63** In the internal of the ecclesiastical district, there was also founded the mission of Yalelo, on the 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1950, and of Bafwasende on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 1951, this latter post, together with that of Panga and of Avakubi were to be annexed to the Vicariate of Wamba in August, 1959.

**64** However, in the same Kisangani, the inhabitants were now 100,000 in number, and it was necessary to think of the creation of a quasi-parish in order to assist the spiritual needs of the Christians. Thus in the same city, besides the old parish of the Cathedral, rose the new parishes of: St. Camile - Kabondo, on the 20<sup>th</sup> May, 1953; St. Joseph - Tshopo, on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1955; Christ the King - Mangopo, on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, 1955; St. Peter of

the Wagenia, on the 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1956; and later, on the eve of the revolution, in 1964, alongside the S. Martha - Lubunga (R.G.), there was to rise the parish of SS. Sacrament, for which the three persons responsible: Fr J. Conrad, Fr A. Aubert and Bro. J. Paps were to be killed during the revolt.

65 We add, in following, the parishes of the Holy Family and of St. Paul of Kabondo, as well as that of Queen of the Martyrs and Tshopo.

66 Meanwhile, in the inside, the new mission of Opienge was founded on 15<sup>th</sup> April, 1956. Also, the Fathers had to undertake the heavy responsibility of the future of the secondary education, above all after the creation of well organised lay schools by the Ministry of the Colonies, who did not spare money, especially if it was schools for Whites! An eloquent example: the Faculty of the Athenaeum of Kisangani was able to exclusively assume, after independence, the Free University of Kisangani!

67 On the 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1956, the College of the Sacred Heart (which the following year was to become interracial, was entrusted to a group of diocesan Priests of Bruges and Fathers of the Sacred Heart. The direction was entrusted to rev. Gerard De Clerk. The school for Agricultural Assistants, which had modestly began at Panga in 1951, was definitively transferred to the new construction of Bengamisa in 1955.

68 Wishing to give also a secondary school to the large centre of Yangambi, the lower part of a college was begun.

69 As the end of this study is only that of presenting the activity of our Congregation in Zaire, we will not dwell on the immense contribution which other Orders of Brothers and Sisters have given in the teaching sector: we have already mentioned this in No. 1,4.

70 In 1957, following the raising of Kindu to a Diocese, Kisangani suffered a last division; in fact the mission posts of Kailo, Punia, Kasese and Lokandu passed over to the new ecclesiastical constituency.

71 We are now nearing the epoch of the third Apostolic Vicariate and the first Archbishop of Kisangani.

72 After 24 years of episcopate, Mons. C. Verfaillie presented his resignation of his pastoral assignments: the Holy See accepted as successor, Fr. Nicola Kinsch. Born in 1904, at Esch-sur-Alzette, arrived in Zaire in 1936, Mons. Kinsch was, during the last years, diocesan inspector and regional superior of Wamba. He received the episcopal ordination from the hands of Mons. Lommel, Bishop of Luxembourg on the 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1958, precisely 50 years after the consecration of Mons. Grison in Rome, (11<sup>th</sup> October, 1908)!

73 On the 10<sup>th</sup> November 1959, Pope John XXIII founded the ecclesiastical hierarchy in the Congo, promoting the Apostolic Vicariate of Stanleyville to the Archdiocese of the same name, of which Mons. N. Kinsch was to be its first Archbishop.

**74** With the arrival of the eve of independence, proclaimed on the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1960, the apostolate of the missionaries became difficult, not for the same fact of national independence, but after the disturbances which precede, accompany and follow it. About the trouble preceding the 30<sup>th</sup> June, we cite, only for Kisangani the turbulent days of the end of October and the first of November, 1959 (with many dead) the determined demagoguery, the racial attacks, the extremists speeches of certain political leaders which were soon interpreted by the less shrewd as an incitement to bum all that which was the pride of the city. The early days of independence remain darkened by the mutiny of the army and the excesses committed by the troops who punched, imprisoned and even massacred on the first orders of a corporal who proclaimed himself commander of unity. By the 14<sup>th</sup> February, at Basoko, Fr Joseph Tegels was killed point blank by an energumen. The morning of New Years Day of 1962 at Kongolo, twenty missionaries of the Holy Spirit were beaten, quartered and butchered in front of their pupils who afterwards had to throw their bodies in the river. Soon after independence, the tribal struggles and the collision of political leaders of opposite tendencies, greatly end a dangered a atmosphere of security and of favourable peace, necessary for any work, even apostolic.

**75** As I have already said, since 1960, certain political leaders, taking on a demagogical tone, started presenting the Christian religion, as an article of foreign importation, the Church as an agent of colonial power, Christian morale - even though it constitutes an ascensional effort - as contrary to ancestral customs; ... all ideas, repeated without stopping by certain political and theoretical africanists, and covered by the most specious arguments. It is not necessary to say that all this did not facilitate the apostolate, remembering the mentality which had been created among the people, especially the young.

**76** Trouble, tribal war, untamed demagoguery, lying propaganda, all was to meet, in the loss for the country, in the tragic happenings of the armed rebellion of 1964.

**77** The last five months of the year, and the first months of 1965, were underlined by the massacre of many innocent natives and foreigners, and many missionaries. Among the victims there were the 51 missionaries of our two dioceses of Kisangani and Wamba, and that is, 28 priests of the Sacred Heart, a diocesan priest, two brothers and twenty sisters.

**78** At Wamba, as we will see later on, were killed, on the 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1964, Mons. Wittebols, together with seven fellow brethren. Maybe the rebels - what is more, called *simbas* (lions) - preferred missionaries? It is unthinkable. But they thought that the National Army was being helped by the Belgians and the Americans; and therefore naturally, took it out on the civilians, especially the Belgians. Now the few foreigners remaining were

generally missionaries. They were imprisoned and, where the liberating forces were not able to arrive in time, as in Wamba, Kisangani-Rive Gauche, Banalia and Bafwasende, destined to atrocious massacres. At Wamba the non Belgians were saved; but elsewhere, as at Kisangani-Rive Gauche, they were all killed without distinction. Certainly in some cases, the anti-christian hate (fed and built during five years), also played its part in these horrible tragedies. At Kisangani as elsewhere, after the liberation of the city, all the missionaries were evacuated. Remaining at the post, old Fr Patrick Rijkers, to whom was added the old Provincial Superior, Joseph Geurts, and the Vicar General, Mons. Fataki, who during the four months, had risked his life a hundred times defending the victims: in all the country he was perhaps the only man who did not tremble in front of the Simbas!

**79** Mons. Kinsch, the Archbishop, was absent during the tragic happenings; in fact he had to prolong his stay in Europe after a series of injuries from a road accident. But on 19<sup>th</sup> May, 1965, as soon as it was possible to return to Zaire, the Pastor returned to his post. Bad enough after the accident, Mons. Kinsch was, as far as personnel went, in the same condition as Mons. Grison was in 1899.

**80** Even so, he reorganized the three parishes of the city, entrusting them to the local diocesan clerics. At the end of August 1965, arrived a squad of voluntary S.C.J. to take over the college. It is easy to have an idea of the destruction and sacking provoked to the missions of the internal Zaire... to tell the truth, everything had disappeared, even the buildings. Even though slowly, the following missions began to rise again: Yangambi, Basoko, Lubuto and, a little later, those of Yanonge, Ubundu, Yaleko and Opienge. However the calm had not completely returned; in 1965 the raids of the Simbas continued in the region of Kisangani,(the seminary, at eleven kilometers distance, remained occupied by the rebels until the first days of September 1965), in July, 1966, the Diabos (katangese military) attacked the city, and the mercenaries tried to cause a coup in July 1967.

**81** The greatest part of the people, aged or ill or too upset about the happenings, never returned. It was necessary to use other solutions, and above all employ more intensely the lay in the sectors which previously were exclusively apostolic. We progressively arrived, thus, at the formation of "Lay Pastors", that is, catechists who after four years of secondary studies, received two years of pastoral training, to then occupy themselves in large sectors, where they practically assumed the functions of a deacon; while a travelling missionary visited them to develop with them pastoral protects, and celebrate the Eucharist and Confession.

**82** We have taken the permission to present, for the Archdiocese of Kisangani, some comparative statistics, just as a simple indication, to demonstrate, in a few points, the consequences which the missionary activity

had to undergo as a result of the happenings in 1964, and why the resumption was difficult. What is said for Kisangani, is also valid *mutatis mutandis* for the diocese of Wamba... and perhaps with more reason.

- In 1964 there were 90 missionaries scj in the Archdiocese; in 1967, they were reduced to 37.
- In 1964 there were 7 congregations of missionary Sisters. Among them 40 were Franciscan Missionary of Mary Sisters and 17 of the Christian Doctrine; in 1967 there only remained two orders, with 7 Franciscans and two Christian Doctrine Sisters.
- In 1964, there were 485 elementary schools which ensured catholic instruction to boys and girls; in 1967 there remained active, only 127.
- In 1964, 24 post elementary schools were functioning; in 1967, they were reduced to 12.
- In 1964 there were 17 hospitals and dispensaries, 5 leper colonies and 5 orphanages financed and run by missionary personnel; in 1967, these figures were respectively reduced to 4, 3 and 2.

**83** While still not recovered from his accident, and not able to deal with that difficult situation, Mons. N. Kinsch gave in his resignation, which was accepted on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1967. Meant to succeed him, as the fourth bishop of Kisangani, was the Vicar General Mons. Augustine Fataki, consecrated at Kisangani on 28<sup>th</sup> January, 1968. He had to affront difficult situations with a personnel still very reduced in number. However, as a positive aspect, the new Pastor was well liked by all the missionaries. Realistic, animated by great zeal, he had no illusions about the future... and the best proof was in the motto chosen by him: *In tribulatione patientes*.

## 2. Vicariate (Diocese) of Wamba

**84** The new Vicariate of Wamba, which rose on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1949, had as Apostolic Vicar, Fr Joseph Wittebols who after the establishment of the hierarchy in the Zaire, became the first Bishop of Wamba.

**85** Born at Etterbeek (Brussels) in 1912, Mons. J. Wittebols, arrived in Zaire in 1938, and was the founder of the College of Kisangani. He was consecrated at Brussels on 16<sup>th</sup> June, 1949, by the hands of H. Em. Card. Van Roey, archbishop of Malines. The new bishop, backed by a strong dynamism, immediately started a grand activity for the systematic and deepening evangelization of the region of Nepoko.

**86** Under this young Guide, active, enterprising, methodical worker and fully aware of the value of his men, the new diocese was thrust forward. Along with the already existing mission posts, soon rose numerous new foundations: Babonde, Bayenga, Legu, Mambasa, Mungbere, Nduye, Ngayu,

Obongoni, without forgetting the Minor Seminary and the College of Lingondo.

**87** Zealous priest and fervent religious, Mons. Wittebols did not ignore that human contact with his collaborators was conditioning for a valid and fertile apostolic work. Thus he did everything in order that among the various groups of missionaries reigned happiness, peace, and collaboration.

**88** It has been written about Mons. Wittebols that the most characteristic aspect of his personality as superior was without doubt that of absolute faith in his collaborators. At one time called Bishop of the Sisters for the fact of being very worried about their material, spiritual and moral situation (“The Young Church of Zaire”, in *Heimat und Mission*, November '72).

**89** Following the happenings of national independence and its repercussion on the life of the diocese, one can repeat, more or less, that which was said for Kisangani in the preceding paragraph and we will not linger on the same considerations. About the uprising at Wamba, 15 days after that of Kisangani, we record that the missionaries had enough time to leave the mission and hide; and had they done so it would not have been right to reprehend them. They, however remained courageously at their posts.

**90** Mons. Wittebols, who was to have participated-in the third session of the Council, remained instead with his missionaries and with his faithful. Unfortunately, here there was also a tragic drama which was more or less identical to that of Kisangani. At Wamba, the Pastor was assassinated together with seven of his fellow brethren on the 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1964. He was the only Bishop to lose his life in that tragedy where 170 missionaries were lost (without counting the 20 of Kongolo). The diocese lost in all 13 missionaries, as on the 27<sup>th</sup> November, another seven of our brethren (of whom some of Kisangani) were killed at Bafwasende. Fr A. Bernardo Longo had already been killed on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November at Mambasa.

**91** We must remember the heroic death of a native Sister of the diocese, Sister Clementina Anaurite of the Order of Jamaa Takatifu, who having refused one of the heads of the *simba* was ferociously beaten. An authentic martyr!

**92** In the diocese of Wamba, the effects of the uprising were sadder than those of Kisangani. In fact the mission posts were nearly all sacked, destroyed, made unusable and abandoned. The number of missionaries killed was large for the small size of the diocese. The majority of the missionaries never returned again to Wamba, or if so very much later, for the fact that during the first two years, the presence of the *simbas* did not guarantee even the minimum of security. In the month of August, 1966, the rebels took another prisoner, Fr Peter Snoeckx. Fr Strijbosch, of the diocese of Kisangani, was freed only in the June of 1967, after 33 months of captivity.

**93** Also, after the murder of Mons. Wittebols, the episcopal see of Wamba remained vacant for five years. For some time, Mons. Fataki was Apostolic Administrator.

**94** Only in October of 1969, a new Bishop of Wamba was nominated, Mons. Gustav Olombe, Vicar General of Kisangani and parish priest of St. Joseph. The consecration was done on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1970, in the same city of Wamba. The young Bishop undertook that task with much courage, knowing that, in order to succeed, he would have to count more on the grace of God than the help of men.

\* \* \* \* \*

**95** Up to now, we have only spoken of the progressive occupation, of the territory entrusted us in 1897, and that is the work of eighty years.

**96** It has treated - or at least one can read between the lines of "apostolic activity in the most extensive meaning of the word"; teaching, education, assisting the sick, catechizing, pastoral ministry, and all that which is expected of missionary personnel. To understand the missionary activity carried out in Zaire during almost a century, it is not valid to compare it with the life offered in our European or in North American Provinces, where certain activities, well defined and limited, are entrusted to our fellow brethren.

**97** The office of a Bishop and his diocesan clergy can give one an idea (even though vague) of what is asked of our missionaries. In the education sector and the sectors of teaching and assisting the sick, everything must be done and allowances must be made for anything which may happen. Under the material and visible ecclesiastical aspect, it is necessary to personally work very hard (with the grace of God, as we know), not only for the construction, of the living Church (of the baptised), but also for the material church which was still missing. There was not only need to build churches (chapels and... cathedrals), but also schools, dispensaries, hospitals, and houses for the missionary personnel.

**98** For this intervened our old co-worker Brothers who had raised hundreds of chapel-schools, tens of churches, schools, dispensaries, maternity homes, hospitals, and houses. Theirs was really an enormous effort, often with derisory material or very primitive, with groups of workers to whom it was necessary to teach everything. They were at the same time architect and foreman... and still are the same. It is enough to limit ourselves to the construction of the cathedral of Kisangani, simple and at the same time beautiful, consecrated on the 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1977. It was the courageous Bro. John Valee, printer, who directed the work during the four and a half years of building, which had cost much fatigue, worry and toil... Nothing was

forgotten, but everything studied and carried out with minute precision, almost to a millimetre. Bro. John died 30.9.79 in Belgium.

**99** It would be necessary to cite the long list of all these able and precious collaborators... However we cannot forget Brothers Alexis Neelemans (d. 18.3.74), Gerald Van Der Peet, Andrew Schroeder (d. 17.5.67), Leo Pizmoht who had constructed the cathedral of Wamba (d. 7.12.76), Tomas Verweijen, as also Brothers Mathias Hansen (d. 13.4.36), Joseph Jans (d. 2.12.39), Boniface Kavaters (d. 28.1.53) and still many others!

**100** There were many Brothers, who, in order to serve the internal missions have spent most of their lives in the office, for example Bro. M. Hebermehl (d. 28.1.30) and the good and unforgettable Bro. Raymond De Waele (d. 6.2.76).

**101** Often, the same Fathers had to use a plumb-line and trowel, as the Brothers were insufficient. We cite only three examples (two original and one recent). We know of the amount built by Father Patrick Rijkers (Lokandu office, School for Agricultural Assistants of Bengamisa...) and how much Fr Bain Brugemann constructed. More recently Fr Leo Mondry made his debut in the building art with the church of St. Peter of the Wagania... his written report was a work of art!

**102** All have covered this land “which is the real heart of Africa” with buildings of every kind: Churches, seminaries, normal and professional schools, leper colonies, social centres... which all cost much toil and suffering but which have contributed to the preparation of new men, “more men and freer!”.

### III. THE REGION OF THE CONGO - THE TWO REGIONS

**103** As said at the beginning of this study, during the first fifty years, the office of Religious Superior of the missionaries was done in fact, by the Apostolic Vicar of Kisangani. The situation was understandable: the bishops were members of our Congregation, the distinction was still not very explicit between the Congregation and the ecclesiastical corporation, between missions and religious houses. But the time arrives when it is necessary to distinguish between Diocese and Congregations, parishes and religious residences, ecclesiastical belongings and Congregational patrimony.

**104** Therefore a region was created (21<sup>st</sup> October 1947) which directly depended on the Generalate and not properly to this or that Province, remembering that the missionaries came from different nations.

## 1. The Region of the Congo

**105** The first Regional Council began its work on the first of March of 1948, and was made up as follows: Regional Superior: Fr William Leyssen; First Counsellor, Fr. Joseph Gerritsen; Second Counsellor, Fr. Nicholas Kinsch.

**106** On the first of March, 1951, Fr J. Gerritsen became Regional Superior and remained so until 1957.

**107** The creation of the Region did not cause any change in the work of the missionaries who, essentially, remained at the total service of the Church of the Congo (and above all, to that portion which had been entrusted to them by the Congregation). The task of the Regional Superior was to be that of promoting the spiritual and religious life of the missionaries, assuring and guaranteeing the conditions (community life, prayer, vows and our spirituality...); which will construct in an efficient manner the missionary apostolate, according to the saying: *in order to be a good missionary, you must be a good religious.*

**108** The idea of the possibility of founding the Congregation in the Congo through the acceptance of native candidates was soon thought of.

**109** On the 28<sup>th</sup> June, 1951, the mission of St. Gabriel was officially raised to a religious house of the Congregation and at the same time as a Noviciate. Fr John de Vries was the first Master of the Novices. Meanwhile some candidates to the Priesthood started their postulancy at St. Gabriel, and were received as novices on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1951, and three of them took their first vows on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1952; among them Bro. John of God Ulimwengu, who remained faithful till his death on 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1976.

**110** During the following years many boys passed from pupils to the noviciate of the Brotherhood, and thirteen of them reached the religious profession. This method of starting recruitment of candidates for the brotherhood amongst religious natives for our Congregation was object of various discussions... Some thought that it would be necessary to have a few Congolese priests in order to back and direct the Brothers. It was even asked (it was even put forward during the first Provincial Chapter of July 1965) if it was not good to found an independent Congregation of Brothers.

## 2. The Regions of Kisangani and of Wamba

**111** After the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1949, the date of the creation of the Diocese of Wamba, the territory of our mission brought two ecclesiastical districts. After some years of experience, it was asked if perhaps it was not better to create two regions, in order to facilitate the contacts both between the ecclesiastical Superiors and the religious Superiors, as between the religious and the religious Superiors. These latter would be better able to understand the specific problems of the diocese of residence.

**112** On the first of March 1957, Fr Charles Poets was nominated Regional Superior of Kisangani, where he was to remain until the end of March 1963, when he was substituted by Fr J. Geurts.

**113** On the same day Fr Nicholas Kinsch was nominated Regional Superior of Wamba, who, after his election as a Bishop in 1958, was substituted by Fr James Martens.

**114** The mission of Maboma was to serve as the religious house.

**115** It must be taken into consideration that it was always the General Council (after 1949) which designated in which diocese the new missionaries should work.

**116** With the hope of really founding the Congregation in the Congo, especially with a view to the Brothers trained at Saint-Gabriel, two seminarists were sent to France at an age when they could carry out their noviciate, and who in fact took their vows on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1957. They were followed by others. Actually, in 1963, the Rector of the Seminary of Kisangani was able to accompany to the Noviciate of Amiens, five students; thus it was thought to have made a start... However!

#### IV. THE PROVINCE OF ZAIRE

**117** The good expansion of the missions did not stop with the Independence, and certain positive elements taken in the prudent hope of recruitment among the native people were obtained; also, a more ample autonomy could not but favour our missionary action, including the help (of men and material means) to accelerate from the different Provinces. All certainly helped to the creation (a little risky for some) of the Zaire Province of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, on the first of July 1964.

##### 1. The Initial Stages - Times of War

**118** On the 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1964 the First Provincial Council began to function, it was made up as follows:

- Provincial Superior: Father Geurts
- First Councillor: Father Marcellus Spoo
- Second Councillor: Father Herman Schimmel
- Third Councillor: Father Charles Poets
- Fourth Councillor: Father Camil Binck
- Provinc. Economist: Father Leo Baeten

**119** It was the 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1964. The Council was not even able to unite for the swearing in of the Provincial, as at that moment, after the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, the city of Kisangani was occupied by the rebels.

**120** I do not want to repeat what I have already said (II, 1). Before the 24<sup>th</sup> November, 1964, which was the start of the liberation, the surviving

missionaries were nearly all evacuated, even though the Father Provincial remained until the month of May 1965. He had in some way to return to Europe where there was to be a reunion, in rather singular conditions, “the first Provincial Chapter”. All the missionaries, with a few exceptions, were to be found in Europe; and the reunion was to be held at Howald (G.D. of Luxemburg) from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> July, 1965. The brethren were divided into four groups: Dutch, Flemish, Luxemburg-Walloon, and Italian. The elections of the delegates of the Provincial Chapters were done by post.

**121** As the Father Provincial Geurts said: “the enthusiasm and generosity animates all the members of our Province, ready, not only to reconstruct at the earliest possible moment all the works set up by our predecessors, but above all to relive them according to the Council”.

**122** It was especially wanted to promote a more personal conception of our religious and apostolic life, a truer contact with african reality and an apostolate which would impress more effectively the youth. Also it was useless to occupy ourselves with rules which would be empty in a future full of uncertainties and unknown.

**123** Starting from March 1965, the first missionaries (Fathers Freiling, Dols, Roelants) returned to Kisangani to restart there, where there was already the possibility of work with the minimum of security. Four parishes, not entrusted to local clerics, were awaiting priests. In the meantime the young seminarists were grouped in the College of the city, together with college students and the pupils of other dioceses who had been able to reach Kisangani. Towards the end of 1965 and at the beginning of 1966, we were also able to adventure towards some of the missions in the interior. Therefore, right from the beginning of the after-rebellion, the possibility of work was not missing. *For the return to the missions of our brethren* the position of the Provincial Council was clear and precise: all were invited to return, even though for the meantime, they could not return to their old posts; but were free to do so or not, to return straight away or later; and if they did not return, they were not to be the object of spiteful criticism.

**124** The return was very slow. Some thought the conditions of security were insufficient. This was to be expected! Others had already started to work in parishes, and where it became difficult to free themselves, both objectively and subjectively. This was to be understood! Lastly, others put forward as a condition of returning “the elaboration of a precise plan of evangelization” by the ecclesiastical authorities, and above all by the religious Superiors!

**125** Truly, with 26 priests for two - dioceses (one of which was without a Bishop) it was difficult to plan thus... in the air! It was clear that, as the facts showed, this was a case of contestation. Do not forget that this was in the years 1965-66, the epoch in which the Western Church, with the contestation,

began the “grand crisis” of the clergy which, in different Countries, led the Church into incredible situations.

**126** Anyway, as the statistics from Kisangani showed, in 1967, after the resignation of Mons. Kinsch (see II, 1) many brethren returned to take up their work with courage. We proudly note the fact that in 1967 there was once more in the Zaire 50 fellow brethren. Here, however, we have arrived at the turning point in the crossroads: *Ilium oportet crescere, me autem minui* which was even more pronounced starting from 1968. A double change appeared; fewer missionaries SCJ came from the Benelux countries (which up until then constituted the largest part of the troupe), and the Priests of S.C.J. were progressively substituted, not by the local clergy (which would have been normal, even though unpracticable as there were not very many) but by missionaries of other congregations.

**127** On the other hand, our Province was no longer confined to the two dioceses of Kisangani and Wamba; and had the possibility of taking on parishes and works in other regions. Thus, towards the end of 1965, the negotiations which had been started in antecedence to obtain a parish in the city from the Archbishop of Kinshasa, were intensified. The Prelate (at the start) would have preferred to entrust us with a group of parishes, but this idea scared us a little and with good reason. An agreement was reached on the following basis: accept two parishes, near enough to each other which if possible could be broken up into other parishes. In March 1966 the construction at Selembao was started and another was prospected at Makala. Fr S. Buccella was already there to help the Scheut. Fathers. With the inauguration on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 1967, he was to be the first parish priest of St. John the Baptist of Selembao, and the parish was entrusted to our italian brethren. Then it was the turn of Makala, which on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1971, became the parish of St. Clement, and entrusted to our polish priests.

**128** The early days of the Province were made even more difficult by the two “little wars” which made the east of the country tremble. In July, 1966, when the work had been courageously returned to, a few garrisons of Katanghesi were moving towards Kisangani, leaving immense regions open to an eventual return of the rebels (II, 2) putting Kisangani itself in danger. Owing to these happenings, some missionaries (5) never returned.

**129** A year later, in July 1967, a similar thing happened with the raids of mercenaries on Kisangani, passing through the east of the country.

**130** At St. Gabriel and in the other two missions, there were, in 1964, ten Zaire brothers, of which, three left in 1965! At Amiens, in 1964, four of the five novices were professed but unfortunately three left at the end of 1965. In all we have had nine professions of cleric novices two went to Rome in 1965 and one of them is a Priest.

## **2. Time of relative peace... and changes**

**131** On 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1967, Father Peter Jansen became Provincial and was to remain in this function until 1976, with groups of different brethren, different as to persons and as to number (reduced Council - enlarged Council).

**132** The greatest preoccupation of the new provincial administration was always that of recruitment of missionary personnel. We were fifty in March 1967; and in 1968, with the return of the peace, the number of returning missionaries increased. At the end of 1968, after having noted the 36 fellow brethren who were certain not to return to the missions, the official statistics showed that in Zaire, 69 missionaries remained; but not all of them were in Zaire, some were still in Europe, and remained there.

**133** This means that the statistics (even the optimistic ones) must be interpreted correctly. The figures which follow are an amazing description of the serious problem of recruitment of missionary personnel (even since Mons. Grison) which is continually asking for new solutions. When examining the list of the fellow brethren who re-entered Zaire after the revolt, we are aware that ten years after, at the end of 1975, thirty nine have disappeared, eleven have died, others have left the Congregation, or definitely left for Europe (28).

**134** Also, on the 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1970, the last of our cleric religious from Zaire left the Congregation, and on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1972, the last but one of our native brothers did the same.

**135** All this shows that to find new solutions one needs much imagination, and much courage in order to put it into practice. Fr Peter Jansen did his best. He turned to - going there personally - North America (U.S.A. and Canada), to England, Poland and Italy. Everywhere the response was positive, with results more or less significant, according to the possibility of the Provinces. The most consistent reinforcements came from Italy and Poland. The highest point reached with the number of personnel effective in Zaire was in 1974 with 71 missionaries (that is to say in the post rebellion period).

**136** On the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1977 the number was reduced to 62. To understand why in 1977 the number of Priests had only risen by 12 compared with those of March 1967 - (despite all the efforts) - one must remember all that has been said above.

**137** Later on, we will give the exact situation and details of the personnel and works as of the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1977.

**138** A burning problem for the missionaries - especially those in the interior - is still that of contact with the other fellow brethren, and with the religious superiors. Contacts which are necessary in a special way when the times are

turbulent, in the moments when there is a major need of encouragement, of sympathy and concrete directions.

**139** For these legitimate needs the enlarged Provincial Council was created which permitted the presence of different sectors, including geographical ones, when important decisions are to be made. Also, the more important posts in the interior, or those which were difficult to get to, could communicate by telephone with Kisangani (Office and Archbishops See), with St. Gabriel's (Provincialate) or amongst themselves.

**140** Lastly, the real human contact, that of the frequent visits of Father Provincial who covered the immense territory in a *land rover* (when there was diesel oil) or more modestly, by making use of travellers who had to go to one place or another.

**141** These are necessary contacts, even though the turbulent times have passed, those which upset most of all the eastern side of the country. However, ever since 1970 a certain heavy demagoguery is reappearing, of which we have spoken above (II, 1), caused above all by the politics of africanization (authenticity); for the untimely zeal and for the arbitrary interpretation of certain subchiefs. The crisis will be often acute, and the violence will double (above all in words) against the Church. The facts are facts! Certain measures taken (which are not even worth qualifying) have created inevitable tensions: the obligatory suppression of all Christian names - even at the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism - suppression of the day of at the four major religious feasts, suppression of the youth movements, suppression of all the free press, suppression of religious emblems (statues, Crucifixes) in public places, and even private ones if they were very visible, suppression of the teaching of religion in all the schools, secularization of catholic schools. These last two measures were reported to me. One can get an idea of the perturbation which all this created among the faithful and the difficult task of the missionaries, above all for those in the interior, abandoned to the arbitration of certain mini-tyrants.

**142** In 1972, with different manifestations the "75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our arrival at Kisangani" was commemorated. At Bruxelles (Mission Procure) at the beginning of December the commemoration day was remembered with a eucharistic celebration presided by Mons. Fataki, Archbishop of Kisangani, followed by an academy with a reception and a dinner attended by the First Secretary of the Embassy of the Zaire.

**143** At Kisangani, on Christmas Night, Mons. Fataki celebrated the Eucharist at the place where, 75 years earlier, his predecessor, Mons. Grison said his first mass in the tropical forest: present was the President of the Republic (visiting Kisangani) and Mrs. Mobutu, and the Rev. Superior General of our Congregation.

**144** *Heimat und Mission*, directed by Bro. P. Hilden, has published in November of 1972, a special number entitled “The Young Church of Zaire”, where the apostolate of our missionaries was described during the 75 years in the heart of Africa. 95,000 copies were printed.

### **3. The Provincial Conferences**

#### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Provincial Chapter - The Directory**

**145** The first provincial Conference was held at St. Gabriel 8-10 July, 1969. From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1972, the second provincial Chapter gathered, and from 29<sup>th</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 1976, the second Provincial conference. We will not give a resume of these three assemblies of the Province. We will only outline some particular prescriptions - discussed and decided in those reunions - and which are found in the Provincial Directory. Yes, as there is a Directory which was approved by the General Council.

**146** “The *special character of our Province*, is more a work camp where the SCJ Brethren, sent by various Provinces, get together in order to work more efficiently and to feel like brothers during their stay in the Zaire” (Dir. Prov. 1.2.1.).

**147** “Eventual vocations for the Religious life. We think that the original aim is that of orientating eventual vocations towards a religious life of bantu inspiration. In cases where this presents itself, we can collaborate to start a similar religious life and also to be the animators. It will be the job of the competent authorities to decide in the case that a candidate manifests a clear and precise option for our Congregation” (Dir. Prov. 1.3.5.).

**148** Division of the Province into *activity groups*. Every group consists of a certain number of “communities” (see below). At the moment there are six groups of different activities, but it is possible to create others, according to the necessity:

1. the missionaries of the interior - west of Kisangani - : Basoko and Yangambi;
2. the missionaries of the interior - east of Kisangani - : Ubundu, Lubuto, Yaleko, Banalia, Opienge, Yanonge;
3. the missionaries of Kinshasa;
4. the missionaries of the city of Kisangani;
5. the missionaries of the region of Wamba;
6. the responsibilities for the different services: office, car pool, carpentry and press.

**149** Each group elects an animator for the term of three years (Dir. Prov. 4, 4.0 and 1).

**150** *The Counsellors of the sectors*. Chosen by the Superior Provincial with the counselling of the members of the sectors (geographic) concerned, will

be consulted for the affairs which interest their sector. Together with the Counsellors (in the sense of Canon Law) they form the enlarged-provincial Council, even though they only have a consultive voice. There are two for the Kisangani sector, one for Wamba and one for Kinshasa (Dir. Prov. 4.5.0 to 3).

151 *The Community life centers*, as the heading implies, is made up of brethren who live under the same roof. The responsible head is nominated *ad nutum* by the Superior Provincial with the consultive vote of his Council. He is not superior in the canonical sense of the word; but we think that in the near future, the heads of the large communities will also be “superior in the canonical sense” (Dir Prov. to 2).

#### 4. Evangelization at the moment

152 After the last ten years, the pastoral ministry of our missionaries - at least for certain tasks, looks more and more like that in our old Christian countries. However the circumstances are very different. It is always an original work. It is difficult to teach (also the Gospel) in a language which is not ours, to a population and a race where the customs and all the culture is different from ours, in a social-political-economical context for which we are not at all prepared, and therefore not used to, in a tropical climate (and one must remember all that these two words entail...).

153 The *evangelization* - in the most extensive sense of the word - means, up to now, a method adapted to the recently christianized countries, or even special initiatives for some regions in particular.

154 It must be remembered that the “catecumenization of children and adults” takes much time and needs continually better methods in order to deepen the religious knowledge which will bring a really Christian life.

155 The *pastoral of matrimony* is one of the biggest worries for a missionary region; in fact our populations, above all those of the city, are not aware of the Christian reality of matrimony; concubinage tends to be rampant without limit as to time, separations are frequent and polygamy a fact. The sacrament of marriage has still not penetrated in the “not much Christian life” of many of our Christians... (and even less Christian) 500 Km further east!).

156 I have mentioned above the catechists, *lay pastors* to which the missions (parishes) of the interior are entrusted. To assist them means to have a lot of zeal and pastoral capacity, on the part of the travelling missionary.

157 With the suppression of the *teaching of religion*, priests and qualified volunteers began courses of religion in the buildings of the parish or in the different quarters (and this in many places still continues). Above all the reunions multiplied, the week-end reflections, the retreats, the reflection and prayer days, with the participation of various walks of life: teachers, members

of the parish council or the Legion of Mary, pupils of the high school, university students, catechists, members of prayer groups... The subjects proposed were also of great variation. The two subjects most frequently dealt with were “marriage and the true Christian life”.

**158** At Kisangani, these reunions were mostly held at the Mons. Grison Center inaugurated on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1968, and situated at St. Gabriel. The Center comprises 25 rooms, assembly hall, a chapel and an enchanting park which is marvellous for meditating in.

**159** Teaching now poses singular problems: to resume the task in the schools after two years of nationalization, of lay teaching and “of nihilism”, calls for, at least as a nucleus, small squads of effective religious and lay teachers; then we can hope for a probability of success, even though with enormous efforts, on an objective level of instruction, of education and training.

**160** The problem of the schools obliges us, naturally, to say a word “on the employment of missionaries in the work of development”. As is known, ever since the start, 80 years ago, our missionaries have contributed above all in the teaching and medical assistance sectors, together with their faithful collaborators. This help still continues at the cost of enormous efforts. Since 1968, we have tried to better, most of all, the conditions of rural life (e.g. Lubutu). This was done by elaborating vast plans in a way in which the interested parties understood, adopted and collaborated in them; otherwise these would be a waste of time and money. There is however, another aspect of the problem: through their work of religious and moral education and training, the missionaries efficiently contribute to the development which, for 90% of it, is tied to the sense of duty, to professional conscience, to a sense of responsibility, to an opening towards the community, to selflessness and honesty, in one word, to the conscience. Above all the young, the young students, must become conscious in this sense, by word and example, to avoid that they become “blood-suckers” of the poor. Fortunately, these “moral norms” for development begin to be understood by the young Africans, more so than certain occidentals who still ask us: “are you working for the development of the country?”. They still dare to ask this question of people deeply employed for half a century, in a work of human advancement, the deepest and the most true!

**161** Our brethren - with the real risk that their words and actions be misinterpreted - our brethren are employed in replying to the fundamental inspiration of the whole people, described by the zairese episcopate (June 1977): “eliminating the misery which oppresses us, eating until we are satisfied, having a good medical service, not being exploited by anybody; having a permanent job; living in situations which do not offend our human dignity; enabling our children to study and assure them a good education...”

avoiding institutions which can manipulate man and reduce him to an instrument of profit or enjoyment...”.

**162** Succeeding the long and fruitful service of Fr P. Jansen, on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1976, Fr Jan Roelants became Superior Provincial. The prerogative of his personal actions which he wants impressed on the actions of all the fellow brethren, can be reassumed thus: “our work of evangelization is the fruit of our meditation and our prayer”. That it may give results, for the good of the Province and the Congregation!

## V. AND HERE WE ARE... IN 1977

**163** In conclusion, it will be certainly useful to give a look together at the works now entrusted to our fellow brethren in Zaire (situation as of the 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1977).

**164** As we have already said, some tasks have been entrusted to members of other Congregations, as in the Archdiocese of Kisangani, and above all, at Wamba. For example, at Kisangani where the parish of the Sacred Family is administered by the Fathers of Scheut, that of St. Camil by the Combonian Fathers, that of Christ the King, university parish and secretariate of the archbishop’s see, by the Jesuits.

**165** There are 62 priests of the Sacred Heart actually working in the Zaire: thirty- one from Benelux and thirty one from other countries, above all Italy (14) and Poland (9). Also the arrival of four new missionaries is imminent, two italians (Fr N. Broccardo and Fr A. Lazzaro) and two Poles (Fr John Adamiuk and Fr Frances Kuchta).

**166** Here is a picture of the activities and placings of the missionary personnel.

### 1. The Archdiocese of Kisangani

#### **167** *St. Gabriel*

- Provincialship: Father Roelants
- Parish: Father van den Hof
- Mons. Grison Center: Father van der Wiele
- Head of the pupils: Brother Feijen
- Cars: Brother Veul
- Carpentry: Brother Mitterling
- Superintendent: Brother Stevens

#### **168** *Kisangani*

- Procure:
  - + Father Ruaro
  - + Father Bertuletti(accountant)

- Press: Brother Valee
- Parishes
  - + Cathedral: Father Nothum
  - + St. Joseph: Father Bedard, parish priest, Father van Gennip chaplain
  - + St. Martha: Father Clifford, Father van Dongen, Brother Murphy, Brother O' Sullivan;
  - + Holy Sacrament: Father Dugdale
  - + Malkia ya Mashahidi: Father De Ceulaer (resident c/o the Procure)
  - + St. Peters Wagenia: Paul Mtume
- College:
  - + Father Nijst, prefect; Father Lommel and Father Osowski

**169** *Interior:*

- Basoko and Mokaria: Fathers Dino Ruaro, Travaglia and Cadei
- Yangambi Our Lady and Sacred Heart: Fathers Szemplinski, Slecza and Stasik.
- Yanonge: Father van Oosterhout (with residence at Kisangani R.G.)
- Inside Rive Gauche: Father Maher (connected with Kis. R.G.)
- Yaleko: Fathers Freilinger and Piernikarczyk.
- Ubundu: Father Steffen.
- Lowa: Father Biskup (connected with Ubundu).
- Lubutu: Fathers Stevelink, Miller and Schumacher; Bro. Rinchar.
- Banalia and Bengamisa: Father Geurts (connected with the Procure).
- Road of the Ituri: Father Van Lierde (connected with the Procure).
- Opienge: Father Mondry.

**170** We should remember that we withdrew from the minor seminary of Kisangani, thus Fathers Biasin and D. Felice will be available for other tasks.

## **2. Diocese of Wamba**

**171** *Parishes*

- Babonde: Fathers Hams, M. Hansen and N. Hansen.
- Legu: Father Robben.
- Bayenga: Father Meeuwesse.
- Ibambi: Fathers Konings, P. Jansen and Ruttens who became diocesan Coordinator of teaching.
- Nduye: Fathers Noacco, Testa and Gaglioni; Bro. Cavaliere.

### 3. Archdiocese of Kinshasa

#### 172 *Parishes*

- St. John the Baptist at Selembau: Fathers Matti, Ravasio and Bro. Pellegrini.
- St. Clement at Makala: Fathers Swiech, Lezanski and Sroczyński.
- Chapel of the parish of St. Anne: Father Maurice Janssen.

173 Lastly, with the necessary discretion, can be added, at Kisangani, the “Interprovincial Philosophical Academy of St. Augustine”: with a visiting SCJ professor, author of this incentive.

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174 Our Missions in Zaire have cost work, sweat, suffering, premature and violent deaths... However is this not a privileged way of realizing the aim of our Congregation: to keep alive the oblation of love of the Heart of Christ?

## ZAIRE PROVINCE - SET UP IN 1964

### Statistics for the last 25 years: 1953 - 1977

#### 175

	Priest	Scholastics	Brothers	Novices	Total
1953 (nullius prov.)	0	0	3	0	3
1954	0	0	1	0	1
1955	0	0	1	0	1
1956	0	0	1	2	3
1957	0	2	1	0	3
1958	0	2	1	2	5
1959	0	2	3	4	9
1960	0	2	6	2	10
1961	1	2	6	3	12
1962	1	1	8	1	11
1963	1	1	8	7	17
1964 (Provincia)	97	5	31	0	133
1965	96	2	27	0	125
1966	96	1	25	0	122
1967	94	1	23	0	118
1968	65	1	15	0	81

*Dehoniana*

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1969	64	1	15	0	80
1970	66	0	18	0	84
1971	66	0	16	0	82
1972	67	0	15	0	82
1973	66	0	14	0	80
1974	65	0	14	0	79
1975	64	0	13	0	77
1976	61	0	11	0	72
1977	60	0	11	1	72