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Decline and Fall: Crisis and the Copperbelt, 1975–2000

Introduction

A Copperbelt boom of three decades was followed by a period of severe and sustained economic decline, involving the collapse of international mineral prices, growing corporate and state indebtedness, political manipulation of company operations and the increasing role of international financial institutions (IFIs) in the mining industry. From the late 1970s until the early 2000s, mineworkers and their families and, in different ways, the wider Copperbelt communities, experienced a profound decline in living standards. This was a period not only of falling real wages and the loss of tens of thousands of formal sector jobs but also the decline and then collapse of much of the quasi-governmental control of residential areas and social provision that characterised company operations during the Copperbelt's 'golden age'.

This chapter briefly explores the causes and effects of this decline, identifying how debt conditionality enabled the IFIs – the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – to play an increasingly prominent role in managing the region's mines, periodically co-operating and clashing with state elites over control of operations and revenue. The Copperbelt was closely studied by IFI experts, who characterised both its industry and society as in urgent need of adjustment. The chapter uses IFI documents to explore the economic and social effects of decline on Copperbelt communities and to explain how they became central to elite knowledge and discourse about the region. In discussing interviewees' characterisation of the timing, causes and consequences of these interlinked economic, social and political crises, the chapter identifies both common themes and cross-border differences in how this period of historical decline is remembered. In the early 1990s, partly as a result of their regimes' inability to resolve their economic crises, both Zambia and the DRC experienced movements for political

reform. While the Zambian Copperbelt's history of autonomous trade unionism and self-conscious cosmopolitanism helped enable the relatively peaceful transition of the country to a liberal democracy, Haut-Katanga's strategic and troublesome position within the Zairian body politic made it a key focus of state repression and politically mobilised ethnic violence, which together effectively derailed political reform. The contrasting outcomes of these movements were partly shaped by the different perceptions of the relationship between Copperbelt societies, mineral wealth and urban identities explored in previous chapters.

In both countries, however, elite actors, national and international, agreed that the Copperbelt needed urgent reform: corporations and communities that had once been characterised as the cutting edge of African modernity were now inefficient, uncompetitive and a constraint to the new modernising forces of globalisation and entrepreneurship. It was therefore necessary to divest soon-to-be privatised companies of their societal obligations. This process, implemented before and during the privatisations of the late 1990s and early 2000s, involved ostensibly rational economic processes in which responsibility for social provision was handed to Copperbelt communities themselves. These processes were, however, marked by official anxiety that Copperbelt residents lacked the entrepreneurial skills and mindset for this new form of modernity.

The chapter does not analyse the problematic and at times corrupt privatisation of ZCCM and *Gécamines*, which has been documented elsewhere.¹ Nor does it address in detail the post-2000 Copperbelt that has evolved in the wake of privatisation and in the context of a Chinese-led mining boom that has once again transformed the fortunes of the region's mining industry and, to a lesser extent, its communities.² It

¹ Rubbers, *Paternalisme en Question*; John Craig, 'Evaluating Privatisation in Zambia: A Tale of Two Processes', *Review of African Political Economy*, 27, 85 (2005), pp. 357–66; Rights and Accountability in Development (RAID), *Zambia, Deregulation and the Denial of Human Rights: Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (Oxford: RAID, 2000).

² For the contemporary Copperbelt see, in particular, the WorkInMining project: www.workinmining.ulg.ac.be (accessed 21 July 2020); and the works of Patience Mususa. For China and Central Africa see Devon Curtis, 'China and the Insecurity of Development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)', *International Peacekeeping*, 20, 5 (2013), pp. 551–69; Yan Hairong and Barry Sautman, "'The Beginning of a World Empire'? Contesting the Discourse

does, however, draw on interviews, alongside archival material, to explore contemporary understanding of the impact of neo-liberalism on Copperbelt society. While many interviewees agree that this was a period in which shared prosperity and company paternalism was destroyed, some believe the era of liberalisation created new opportunities for individual freedom and self-mastery. In articulating their memories of the Copperbelt's decline, interviewees have, as always, framed their characterisation of this and earlier periods in relation to their understanding of the present day. From the late 1980s, the decline in living standards of Copperbelt mineworkers and their families provided the context for historical and ethnographic studies that identified how those populations characterised their precarious and diminished existence in relation to a fondly remembered golden past – a past that, as this study has shown, was never the reality for most Copperbelt residents. Ferguson's seminal ethnography of Luanshya in the late 1980s captured the mood of dissonance, pessimism and nostalgia rooted in a memory of better times associated with high wages and company social provision.³ Mususa's mid-2000s anthropological study of Luanshya explored the precarious lives of Copperbelt residents, particularly women, as they struggled to survive in a neo-liberal environment where mine company services had withered or entirely disappeared. Mususa engages more critically than Ferguson with the periodisation of decline articulated by her respondents, noting how the need to supplement low mine salaries with trading was a sign of economic decline even in the 1980s.⁴

In Haut-Katanga, Dibwe dia Mwembu's interviews in the late 1990s and early 2000s provide similar evidence of nostalgia, there rooted in the notion that company services reflected a genuine if authoritarian paternalism.⁵ Rubbers' research shows how this assertion of an unproblematic 'golden age' enables retrenched workers to make claims

of Chinese Copper Mining in Zambia', *Modern China*, 39, 2 (2013), pp. 131–64; and Dan Haglund, 'In It for the Long Term? Governance and Learning among Chinese Investors in Zambia's Copper Sector', *China Quarterly*, 199 (2009), pp. 627–46.

³ Ferguson, *Expectations of Modernity*.

⁴ Patience Mususa, "'Getting By": Life on the Copperbelt After the Privatisation of the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines', *Social Dynamics*, 36, 2 (2010), pp. 380–94.

⁵ Dibwe dia Mwembu, *Bwana Shaba*. For a comparative analysis of service provision in company-run towns, see Borges and Torres, *Company Towns*.

on the companies that had abandoned them.⁶ Dibwe dia Mwembu's Katangese interviewees overwhelmingly situate the region's decline in the post-1990 period, during which the linked political and economic crises that brought the mining industry to its knees were followed by war and a disastrous privatisation process. It is, however, clear to many of our interviewees that the roots of these crises lay in the unresolved tensions of the Mobutu period, during which company social infrastructure was already in decline. Our interviewees provided explanations for this rooted in the political manipulation of the mining industry, but disagreed about who was to blame.

The impact of nostalgia on memory is widely seen as a problem for historians to overcome but it is arguably no more problematic than the assumption of historical progress, which was, until recently, hegemonic in social scientific research. While nostalgia is in contemporary African studies often linked to a longing for the colonial era, in the Copperbelt it is more closely associated with the post-colonial period of corporate welfarism, recalled in comparison with its recent decline.⁷ Certainly, capturing a history that encompasses both real experiences of social and economic decline and memories of it shaped by nostalgic narratives carries with it the challenge of accounting for the ways in which popular discourse about the past has been shaped by both the common and specific experiences of diverse sections of the Katangese and Zambian Copperbelt's communities, something to which this chapter makes a modest contribution. The juxtaposition of material decline to nostalgia for better times is not, however, designed to expose the accuracy of respondents' memories or to counterpose historical 'reality' to the fallibility and political utility of nostalgia.⁸ Rather, the aim is to draw attention to the ways in which the different meanings of this 'better past' and characterisations and explanations of 'decline' reflect diverse interpretations and experience, particularly for those residents whose interests were only indirectly linked to mining. While it is evident that mine companies provided far better services to their workers and immediate families in the remembered past than either companies or states do today, the historical significance of such

⁶ Rubbers, *Paternalisme en Question*.

⁷ William Cunningham Bissell, 'Engaging Colonial Nostalgia', *Cultural Anthropology*, 20, 2 (2008), pp. 215–48.

⁸ Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 2016 [1992]).

provision and its loss are more varied. While many interviewees highlight positive aspects of company paternalism, others recall the ‘golden age’ as one of suffocating control and emphasise the opportunities created by its demise.

Cross-Border Decline, 1975–1989

From the mid-1970s, the central African Copperbelt became associated with economic decline and, within a few years, was characterised as an uncompetitive dinosaur, requiring radical reform to survive. The collapse of international mineral prices, coupled with a general adverse shift in the terms of trade, caused Zambia’s GDP to fall 25 per cent between 1974 and 1977. The mistaken belief that this was a reversible hiatus led to stimulatory spending and, via mechanisms such as the 1976 IMF standby agreement, enduring indebtedness. Zambia already had an effectively unpayable debt by 1978.⁹ Likewise in Zaire, the World Bank provided *Gécamines* with a US\$100m loan to bridge what was wrongly assumed to be a brief slowdown: ‘[m]edium term prospects for export earnings and government revenues are good. After a decline in 1975, world copper prices are expected to recover substantially over the remainder of the decade’.¹⁰ Copperbelt mineral production was also hurt by the increasing cost and difficulty of exports, greatly disrupted by the closure of the Lobito export route as a result of the Angolan conflict and Zambia’s closure of its border with Rhodesia in 1973.

In this context, political tension grew between Zaire and Zambia, reflecting both countries’ economic difficulties, as well as their divergent political alignments in the context of an increasingly violent southern African liberation struggle. For example, in 1977, state-controlled Zambian newspapers decried Zairians’ use of Zambian schools and hospitals, alongside allegations that Zairian military planes had dropped bombs inside Zambian territory.¹¹ The border

⁹ International Monetary Fund Archives (hereafter IMFA), C/Zambia/810 Mission, Russo to MD IMF, ‘Zambia – Special Consultations’, 10 January 1979.

¹⁰ WB online archives, ‘Report and Recommendation of the President to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Loan to Gécamines’, Report P-1551-CK, 2 January 1975.

¹¹ *ToZ*, 13 April 1977; 23 July 1977; 16 August 1977; 17 August 1977; 13 September 1977; 6 December 1977.

itself became a means of survival and a source of scarce goods: at Mokambo, Zambian women traders bought textiles that were in short supply south of the border, while shortages in Zaire were offset by the smuggling of price-controlled Zambian goods such as maize meal, clothing and petrol.¹² Zairian residents of Zambia were periodically detained and deported, despite their claims that they had been living in Zambia since before independence (see also Chapter 6).¹³

Zaire's mining-dependent economy was badly hit by the May 1978 Shaba II invasion. This brief occupation of Kolwezi by ex-Katangese gendarmes, the killing of European workers taken hostage and its violent repression by Western military forces, exposed the vulnerability of the Zairian regime.¹⁴ In the midst of Shaba II, Mobutu accused Zambia of harbouring Katangese rebels, something angrily denied by President Kaunda.¹⁵ The participation of 200 Katangese dissidents in Zambia's foiled 1980 coup attempt ran alongside continued allegations of military incursions and soldiers' involvement in smuggling, looting and vehicle theft.¹⁶ The end of Zimbabwe's liberation war brought about limited rapprochement, marked by summits bringing together Kaunda, Mobutu and other southern African leaders, for example in Lubumbashi in July 1980.¹⁷ The two countries sought to co-operate in managing the sale of cobalt and in 1981 a joint border commission was established to address tensions.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the periodic harassment and rounding up of 'illegal aliens' and allegations about the smuggling of price-controlled goods continued to the late 1980s.¹⁹ A stereotype emerged among Zambians of their Zairian neighbours as materialistic, corrupt and involved in illegal activities, enabled by possession of Zambian national identity cards.²⁰ For some interviewees, rising crime and cross-border insecurity were characteristic of the crisis:

¹² *ToZ*, 31 March 1982; 11 October 1982. Mufulira interviews: Dennis Tembo and Ennis Zulu, 6 July 2018; Fridah Mwale, 6 July 2018.

¹³ *ToZ*, 23 June 1982. ¹⁴ Larmer, 'Local Conflicts in a Transnational War'.

¹⁵ *ToZ*, 27 May 1978. ¹⁶ *ToZ*, 14 May 1981; 13 June 1981; 4 March 1982.

¹⁷ *ToZ*, 5 September 1981; 4 November 1981; 7 November 1981; *Mwana Shaba*, 299, July 1980.

¹⁸ *ToZ*, 3 September 1981; 21 February 1984.

¹⁹ *ToZ*, 13 January 1986; 9 August 1986; 20 October 1986; 12 March 1987.

²⁰ Mufulira interviews: Bobby Jackson Kabamba; Juliana Sakala; Chrispin Chani, 16 July 2018; Foster Kunda; Mary Nomba, 27 July 2018.

It was in 1982 or 1983. The whole of Copperbelt they started putting [burglar bars on windows and doors] . . . because burglars would come and break the window pane then come in. . . . During Mobutu's era, it was real terrible. . . . We used to lose three to four vehicles every night here in Mufulira . . . the next day it's in Congo.²¹

Mining was sheltered from the worst aspects of decline until the mid-1980s, as states, IFIs and donors sought to ring-fence this crucial economic sector. Economic diversification was increasingly urgent but, in the immediate term, mining continued to be the region's economic lifeline. In practice, the mining sector served as a cash cow that was drained to feed other economic priorities, whether the patronage projects of senior politicians or debt repayment to donors. The limited availability of foreign exchange resulted in an exodus of skilled expatriate staff and shortages of expensive mine equipment that adversely affected production. While many attempts at reform and austerity were announced, few were effectively implemented.

Haut-Katanga: Corruption, Conflict and Control

In Zaire, economic decline was exacerbated by the political manipulation of mining revenue, the primary source of foreign exchange earnings. The establishment of SOZACOM (*Société Zairoise de Commercialisation des Minéraux*) in 1974 enabled the Mobutu regime to conduct off-the-book cobalt sales and divert revenue from *Gécamines*.²² In 1981, former Prime Minister Nguza Karl I Bond testified to the US Congress regarding the massive corruption involved, as the *Wall Street Journal* reported: 'Mr. Nguza claims that President Mobutu himself skimmed tens of millions of dollars last year from the state-owned *Gécamines* mining company and from foreign aid'.²³

By the late 1970s, when Zaire already owed Western governments US\$4.7bn, IFI reform efforts focussed on *Gécamines*. The IMF found that its workers' living standards had declined considerably:

²¹ Patson Katwisi interview.

²² 'Cobalt Price has Skidded, and Big Factor is Unofficial Sales by Zaire, Dealers Say', *Wall Street Journal*, 13 September 1979.

²³ 'Zaire's Ills, Changed French Attitudes Signal Challenges to U.S. Africa Goals', *Wall Street Journal*, 14 September 1981.

purchasing power, between 01/07/74 and 01/01/79, had fallen by 50.1% for senior African personnel ... Following the devaluation of the Zaire, social tension had become such that the Management Committee had to take provisional measures to reduce this tension ... a decision was taken, in February 1979, to increase the additional allowance from 15,000 to 35,000 Z. Last March, a base salary increase of 25% was granted.²⁴

Donor officials were continually frustrated by such ad hoc pay rises as a response to rampant inflation.²⁵ In its relationship with Western powers and IFIs, Zaire adopted what Young and Turner memorably term the ‘diplomacy of bankruptcy’: seeking to avoid loan conditions by bilateral appeals to Mobutu’s Cold War allies, the United States and France.²⁶ Acquiring accurate financial data was virtually impossible for an economy where ‘corruption’ was sanctioned and practised at the top of government. Unrealistically high targets for copper production – necessary to support unfounded claims that the company could balance its books over the medium-term – were continually missed. *Gécamines* underwrote the railway company SNCZ and the electricity generator SNEL, as well as politically prestigious construction projects.²⁷ The company was, like ZCCM, starved of the foreign exchange it needed to purchase equipment and pay expatriate workers.²⁸ In a typical IFI analysis from 1978, a World Bank official reported

that the autonomy of the company was threatened and that due to political interference from above, there was no follow up on expenses while some receipts were diverted ... there was a total erosion of management, no control over productivity, morale was very low ... serious problems of staffing were threatening the production level in the coming months. ... *Gécamines* does not control either its receipts or its expenditures.²⁹

²⁴ IMFA, Zaire – 831, *Gécamines*, 1977–8, *Gécamines* Council Process-Verbal, 19 April 1979.

²⁵ IMFA, ‘Zaire – Implementation of 1979 Program’, 1979–80, E. L. Bornemann, ‘Call from Mr Walker’, 14 September 1979, and Christine Bindert, ‘Zaire – Monitoring of Stand-By Program’, 19 September 1979.

²⁶ Young and Turner, *Rise and Decline*, pp. 378–86.

²⁷ IMFA, Zaire – Implementation of 1979 Program, 1979–80, ‘Zaire-*Gécamines*’, 8 November 1979.

²⁸ IMFA, Zaire – 831 – *Gécamines*, 1977–8, Bindert, ‘Zaire – Meeting with the IBRD and the Zairian Delegation’, 29 September 1978.

²⁹ IMFA, Zaire – 831 – *Gécamines*, 1977–8, Bindert, ‘Zaire – Meeting with the IBRD and the Zairian Delegation’, 29 September 1978, pp. 1–2.

Mobutu's corrupt governance provides for many Copperbelt interviewees a powerful explanation of decline, characterised both by its economic effects and the daily humiliations of authoritarian rule:

We suffered with Mobutu. The officials of Mobutu, who had not even studied, disturbed, humiliated, extorted. You can't buy a shirt with your own money: when leaving the store, a Mobutu agent asks you to present your baptism document, for example. We needed freedom.³⁰

Gécamines Chef de Cité Jérôme Mulunda, however, balances the negative experience of political repression with the comparative economic stability of the period.³¹ Others, like Mwanza Lukinde, have only positive memories of life under Mobutu:

President Mobutu's period, for us from *Gécamines*, was a good period. . . . we had our salary every month. We had our allowances as it should be, the labour code was well respected. We had advantages that allowed us to live well. . . . we had food, we could buy vehicles; in short, it was good.³²

For Musale Kibombo, Katanga's economic decline resulted not only from Mobutu's exploitation but also his unwelcome opening of the province to outsiders: 'When Mobutu came to power, with his slogan of one country, one father, one mother, people came from all over to Katanga. This is where it started to degenerate'.³³ Gaston Mutiti explains *Gécamines'* decline in the context of its longstanding 'exploitation' by external Congolese actors and its occupation by foreign soldiers during and after the Shaba wars:

[They] . . . resented the Katangese, Mobutu and all those around him. . . . the problem started with the two [Shaba] wars . . . during this period, we, all Congolese, we did what we called the war effort. So you know, the people [were] being very badly paid . . . When a minister came here on a mission, he was paid on a mission but he had to arrive at *Gécamines*, asking that he be given some money . . . The guesthouses are *Gécamines*. So, everything weighed on *Gécamines*, so much so that the company found itself in the situation, people were so badly paid, everything was finished.³⁴

Zaire's indebtedness and Mobutu's increasingly limited room for manoeuvre led to the abolition of SOZACOM in 1984 and to a more

³⁰ Banza Mutunda interview. ³¹ Jérôme Kipili Mulunda interview.

³² Mwanza Lukinde interview, 5 June 2018. ³³ Musale Kibombo interview.

³⁴ Gaston Mutiti interview.

transparent mineral sales system. International financial institutions promoted economic liberalisation policies – devaluation, price decontrols and spending controls – that had a deflationary effect, as the World Bank acknowledged in 1986: ‘Soaring debt service payments in local currency terms, have necessitated massive cuts in salaries, expenditures on goods and services, and investment expenditures in real terms’.³⁵ The IFIs increasingly directed *Gécamines* management decisions, for example by vetting senior appointments and overseeing the hiring of a Belgian customs team to investigate smuggling.³⁶ A new 1986 World Bank loan of US\$110m was conditional on the full autonomy of *Gécamines*’ management from state authority.³⁷ That agreement characterised the company’s social wage as a problem to be addressed:

compensation policies need to be reviewed. While salaries have not kept up with inflation, the company offers generous fringe benefits (free housing, schooling and medical care and subsidized food prices). As a result, absenteeism has been growing and low salaries are a deterrent to hiring competent technical personnel.³⁸

In 1989 it was agreed that ‘all dividend payments by GÉCAMINES must obtain prior approval from the World Bank’.³⁹ That year, Katanga’s largest underground mine at Kamoto collapsed, causing a huge loss in mineral production. Attempts at external financial regulation proved insufficient to arrest the growing economic and political crisis that would soon engulf Zaire.

While Mobutu’s regime struggled to maintain control over *Gécamines* finances in the face of IFI intervention, it was more successful in controlling political expression in Katanga/Shaba. In the late 1970s and early

³⁵ WB online archives, ‘Report and Recommendation of the President of the IBRD to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Loan ...’, Report P-4268-ZR, 27 March 1986.

³⁶ IMFA, Zaire – 831 – Gécamines, 1977–8, WB Office Memorandum, ‘Gecamines, Loan 1090-ZR, Negotiation of Amending Agreement – May 28–29 Back-to-Office Report’, 4 June 1979.

³⁷ Rubbers, *Le Paternalisme*, p. 46.

³⁸ WB online archives, ‘Report and Recommendation of the President of the IBRD to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Loan’, Report P-4268-ZR, 27 March 1986.

³⁹ IMF online archives, ‘Zaire – Structural Adjustment Facility, Policy Framework Paper, April 1989–March 1992’, 17 May 1989, p. 18.

1980s, the MPR strengthened its presence in mine *cités*, building on and merging with the company's existing structures. Officials of the party and its youth wing, the *Jeunesse du Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (JMPR), were closely involved in overseeing mine communities. This enlarged conceptualisation of nationalised company paternalism is evident in *Gécamines* CEO Umba Kayamitala's New Year message to workers in 1976:

1975 has certainly been a difficult year, characterised mainly by the fallout from the economic crisis which shook the whole world. To deal with this crisis, the Guide to the Zairian Revolution [Mobutu] took drastic measures and invited us all to make sacrifices. I owe it to you to share with you the pride I feel in the discipline, in the self-denial, in a word the militancy that you have shown in this difficult and momentary conjuncture.⁴⁰

With the establishment that year of JMPR committees in workplaces, party control of the company was strengthened: 'The *Gécamines* family indeed wants to be strong, united, counting on each of its children. . . . May the year 1976 find you armed with a will to do well the work entrusted to you in order to achieve the objectives assigned by the nation'.⁴¹ Workers were enjoined, at workplace party seminars and in the pages of *Mwana Shaba*, to make 'revolutionary' sacrifices in the national interest.⁴² Meanwhile, the *Gécamines*' cultural events that invoked company paternalism had morphed into '*animations politiques*', parades with marching bands and singing that celebrated both the company and Mobutu (Chapter 7).⁴³

It was, however, increasingly clear that, as *Gécamines* CEO Robert Crem admitted in *Mwana Shaba* in 1983, company social services would be severely cut:

The fact that *Gécamines* houses its staff, provides medical treatment, sells items at reduced prices in order to safeguard the purchasing power of the worker . . . leads the company to be given the unflattering epithet of paternalism. . . . as a historical phenomenon, paternalism could well be justified at its beginnings, but not indefinitely.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *Mwana Shaba*, 245–246–247, January–March 1976, p. 1. ⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² See, for example, *Mwana Shaba*, 261, 15 May 1977, p. 1 and p. 7, and 324, 10/82, p. 1 and p. 5.

⁴³ GCM Likasi, 'Organisation du 1er Festival d'Animation Politique', 1 June 1984.

⁴⁴ *Mwana Shaba*, 333, July 1983, p. 6.

Zambia: Liberation, Losses and Labour Unrest

In the late 1970s, Zambia experienced a similarly devastating economic downturn, together with an increased military threat from racist southern African regimes. Kaunda was lauded internationally for supporting regional liberation movements but – for some interviewees – this support came at their expense, as they experienced food and commodity shortages.⁴⁵ Dennis Tembo recalls: ‘Kaunda used to tell us to suffer so that we can help liberate the neighbouring countries’.⁴⁶ Henry Longwane links falling real wages to the same issue:

[We were] [w]orse off, those days during the Kaunda era, we would even be paid amounts which could not even buy a bag of charcoal. . . . Kaunda was taking out a lot of money to go and fight for independence for other countries such as Zimbabwe and Namibia and this was known by everyone countrywide.⁴⁷

The widespread labour unrest of Zambia’s First Republic was a thing of the past, as formal sector employment stagnated and real wages fell. As the World Bank reported, the value of ZCCM salaries collapsed between 1970 and 1983:

mineworkers (ZCCM) have gone through a much larger decline in real wages than other groups of workers. Whereas mineworkers used to be much better paid than government unskilled workers in 1970, by the early 1980s their wages had fallen to a level in line with other better-paid unskilled workers.⁴⁸

Although the characterisation of mineworkers as a labour aristocracy was no longer viable, donor policy continued to be influenced by the notion that Zambia had a uniquely problematic urban society whose residents benefited from consumption subsidies that damaged the rural economy and fuelled urban migration. Bates and Collier argued that Zambia’s political system ‘induced a systematic bias in favour of the formation of state industries, the conferral of consumer subsidies, and the control of prices. The pattern of policy bias systematically favoured

⁴⁵ Chrispin Chani interview, 16 July 2018. ⁴⁶ Dennis Tembo interview.

⁴⁷ Henry Longwane interview, 10 July 2018.

⁴⁸ WB online, ‘Zambia: Wage Policy and the Structure of Wages and Employment’, Report 5727-ZA, 7 May 1986, p. 59.

urban consumers'.⁴⁹ Potts later showed that population growth in Copperbelt towns was, by the 1980s, lower than the national average and that the population of some towns, including Mufulira, was actually falling.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the IFIs' increasingly influential neo-liberal policy recommendations viewed state-led industrial development as inherently problematic.⁵¹ 'Market reforms' and the resultant huge rises in living costs were seen as a necessary price to pay to create a free market economy.

These policies shaped conflict between the Zambian state and Copperbelt labour unions over the long delayed integration of mine townships into local government structures in 1980–1 (see also Chapter 3).⁵² This integration, designed to reduce the quality and cost of social service provision to mineworkers and their families, prompted a major wave of industrial action and led the government to suspend most ZCTU and MUZ leaders.⁵³ Striking mineworkers rioted and some were shot by police – 58 people were seriously wounded and K20m (c.US\$15m) of mine production was lost.⁵⁴ In August 1981, four senior labour leaders, including MUZ officials and ZCTU Chairman Frederick Chiluba, were detained, accused of using the strike action for political ends.⁵⁵ Zambian mine townships and, to a lesser extent, the wider Copperbelt, were from this point forward the centre of unofficial opposition to UNIP.

By the early 1980s the IFIs were convinced that the main barrier to establishing a more market-oriented economy was the government's inability to make its urban population poorer:

Since the mid-1970's, Zambia has attempted a succession of adjustment programs supported by Fund arrangements, but most have foundered because of unexpected declines in copper prices and the inability to reduce domestic expenditure in line with the fall in income and export earnings.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Robert H. Bates and Paul Collier, 'The Politics and Economics of Policy Reform in Zambia', *Journal of African Economies*, 4, 1 (1995), pp. 115–43, p. 141.

⁵⁰ Potts, 'Counter-Urbanisation on the Zambian Copperbelt?.'

⁵¹ World Bank, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1981).

⁵² Mijere, 'The mineworkers' resistance to governmental decentralisation'; Burawoy, 'The Hidden Abode of Under-Development', pp. 123–4.

⁵³ *ToZ*, 10 January 1981. ⁵⁴ *ToZ*, 7 February 1981.

⁵⁵ *ToZ*, 18 September 1981.

⁵⁶ IMFA, 'Zambia 011 – Economic Situation and Prospects', 1974–5, Bhatia to Callendar, 30 October 1984.

The establishment of Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines (ZCCM) in 1982, an initiative driven by donor demands for greater efficiency in the loss-making industry, is recalled by many mineworkers as consolidating state elites' manipulation of mining:

There was a time when they just combined all the divisions and it became ZCCM, that was the time when there was a problem because all the monies that was supposed to end here was taken to Lusaka and they could share there. So here, there were times when the operations were paralysed because money was not enough to run the mining operations.⁵⁷

The failure of economic liberalisation was blamed by IFIs on mine companies characterised as inefficient and unproductive, whose managers were unable or unwilling to implement the 'painful' measures necessary to 'modernise' their operations and workforce. A 1984 report stated: 'there is a general lack of discipline among mine workers attributable to the weaknesses of the managerial structure and to the lack of incentives built into the wage structure'. The necessary 'rationalisation' of ZCCM operations involved the 'closing of uneconomical operations and permanent or temporary release of some labor, with their far-reaching social consequences'.⁵⁸ The wider reform programme necessitated reducing urban living standards in general and on the Copperbelt in particular. A far-reaching adjustment programme implemented under World Bank auspices from 1986 involved the removal of price controls, a new auction system to allocate foreign exchange and other market-oriented reforms.⁵⁹ Kaunda justified the resultant hardships in a characteristically ruralist speech that replicated typically colonial perspectives regarding urban unemployment:

Every Zambian has a village to go back to. . . . If you have no job in town you are not supposed to be here. You are supposed to be at your village, producing crops. Life has become hard for the urban dweller because of the high prices. On the other hand, the high prices of agricultural crops now make

⁵⁷ Boston Mwenya interview.

⁵⁸ WB online archives, 'Staff Appraisal Report, Zambia, Export Rehabilitation and Diversification Project', Report 4624-ZA, 22 February 1984, p. 8.

⁵⁹ ZCCM-IH, 2.5.4I, World Bank, Program Performance Audit Report – Zambia – Industrial Reorientation Project, 30 June 1992.

agriculture more attractive. . . . Loafers, look out! It may soon be too expensive for you to stay in town.⁶⁰

In December 1986 the removal of subsidies caused a doubling in the maize meal price, panic buying, shortages and widespread rioting on the Copperbelt.⁶¹ A curfew was imposed in Kitwe and fifteen people were killed by the police.⁶² Following ZCTU criticism of the IMF, the price rises were reversed. Workers sought compensatory wage increases for rising prices through unofficial strikes. Kaunda initially claimed 'the initiators of the strikes were politically motivated'.⁶³ However, the entire IMF programme was cancelled on May Day 1987, demonstrating the ability of popular mobilisation to change government policy and the weakness of the one-party state regime.

A subsequent UNIP 'home-grown' reform programme, including measures such as a minimum wage, was opposed by the IFIs because it 'would have an adverse effect on investment and growth'.⁶⁴ By 1989, the government again accepted the need to implement reforms demanded by donors, including the removal of all food subsidies and the steady alignment of official and market exchange rates. Cuts were implemented to government budgets, but IMF officials presented a profoundly pessimistic view of Zambia's economic prospects, partly because of urban resistance to its policies:

Zambia's main copper mine will be depleted in about a decade and we project that the purchasing power of Zambia's copper exports at the turn of the century will be only 20 percent of what it is today.⁶⁵

It is clear that, even with the best of intentions, Zambia cannot fully service its external arrears and due maturities on a sustainable basis without causing serious dislocations to the economy and probably internal social unrest.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ IMFA, 'Zambia 012 – Government and Politics', 1985–6, Kaunda national press conference, 8 January 1986.

⁶¹ *ToZ*, 10 December 1986. ⁶² *ToZ*, 15 December 1986.

⁶³ *ToZ*, 4 April 1987; Per Nordlund, *Organising the Political Agora: Domination and Democratisation in Zambia and Zimbabwe* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1996), p. 91.

⁶⁴ IMFA, 'Zambia – SAF III', 1988–90, 'IMF Staff Report for the 1988 Article IV Consultation', May 1988, p. 36.

⁶⁵ IMFA, 'Zambia – SAF III', 1988–90, 'Zambia-Fund Staff Statement for Donors Meeting', Paris, 28 July 1989, p. 3.

⁶⁶ IMFA, 'Zambia – SAF III', 1988–90, 'Zambia: Economic and Financial Policy Framework, 1989–93', 25 August 1989, p. 5.

Despite this, mining remained, in IFI policy assumptions, the economic mainstay in the medium term. Although copper's contribution to GDP had fallen from 38 per cent in 1970 to 15 per cent in 1988, it still represented 85 per cent of exports.⁶⁷

Manifestations of the Crisis

On the ground, the growing crisis manifested itself in a substantial decline of economic and social conditions across the Copperbelt. The value of real wages had fallen drastically and some skilled African workers, like their European counterparts, implemented exit strategies. Patson Katwisi took early retirement aged 53, in a period of job cuts: 'at that time the mines became far much worse. Miners started facing a lot of problems. So the so called suffering found in [mine] companies taught me to be on my own'.⁶⁸

Mine companies produced evidence not only of this decline but also of their own reduced control over their communities. In 1988 an inventory was compiled by *Gécamines* officials of informal and illegal activities taking place in the company-owned houses of Likasi mine-workers. These included churches and small businesses; in some cases, new structures had been built to house these activities.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, school classes were taking place in classrooms without doors or glass in windows and some workers were not receiving their food rations.⁷⁰ Management meetings involving company, MPR and union representatives provided a forum for complaints about the deteriorating quality of township life. A single meeting in March 1989 in Likasi discussed rising insecurity, water supply problems, infestations of cockroaches and mosquitos, the lack of glass in windows and doors for houses, waste disposal problems, the theft of taps and transportation problems. These actors disputed and sought to identify who was to blame. Citoyen Muzinga, a JMPR representative, asserted: 'There are too many cases of theft being reported in our *cités*. We suspect that people are coming from outside. They steal everything including the copper

⁶⁷ IMFA, 'Zambia – SAF III', 1988–90, 'Zambia: Economic and Financial Policy Framework, 1989–93', 25 August 1989, p. 1.

⁶⁸ Patson Katwisi interview.

⁶⁹ GCM Likasi, Panda Chief of Personnel, 13 October 1988.

⁷⁰ GCM Likasi, *PV de la Réunion du Comité Cellulaire MPR/DSA/DGP*, 28 March 1989, p. 2.

alloy waste on the mine site'.⁷¹ While company officials accused workers of complicity in the theft of materials, union representatives criticised the corrupt allocation of jobs by senior state and company officials to their relatives and friends and asked rhetorically what workers who did not have friends in high places could do.⁷²

In 1987, prompted by the December 1986 'food riots' (see above) in which mine township youth had played a prominent role, ZCCM conducted a major investigation into community services. This sought '[t]o establish the youth population in each Mine township by reviewing the number of dependent children under the age of 25 years per household'.⁷³ The report found that 59.1 per cent of the township population were below fifteen years of age and 71.9 per cent were twenty-five or under. This knowledge production exercise was noteworthy for going beyond company-controlled territory to investigate conditions in the 'shanty townships bordering Mine areas'. The report, which focussed on Nkana/Kitwe, offered a devastating account of decline: mine 'townships are in an advanced state of decay; the remains of what once used to be roads are clogged with refuse; open sewerage systems and gutters pollute the atmosphere and pose a real health hazard to inhabitants'.⁷⁴ Houses had broken windows, rotten fittings and had (as in Likasi) been adorned with 'illegal extensions'. Soccer pitches and tennis courts were overgrown and cinema halls were disused.

The team observed, in all mine townships visited, that large groups of youths and children gathered on street corners and at markets, bars and bus stops, making some areas inaccessible to outsiders and ZCCM officials.⁷⁵ They controlled markets and 'charge protection money (rent) and impose their own version of law and order'.⁷⁶ In five shanty towns neighbouring ZCCM townships, there were no community

⁷¹ GCM Likasi, PV Meeting MPR/DSA/DGP, 28 March 1989.

⁷² GCM files, *PV de la Réunion du Comité Cellulaire* MPR/DSA/DGP, 28 March 1989 and 30 October 1989.

⁷³ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, 'ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services', 1987, p. 1.

⁷⁴ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, 'ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services', 1987, p. 4.

⁷⁵ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, 'ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services', 1987, p. 6.

⁷⁶ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, 'ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services', 1987, p. 5.

services and just one health clinic, which lacked permanent staff or facilities. Recognising that disease did not obey official demarcations, ZCCM was already spraying for mosquitos in two of the shanty towns. The breakdown of distinctions between township and informal settlements was also manifest in the fact that shanty dwellings were built from company materials such as ‘metal roofing, mainly drumsheets most of which were labelled “ZCCM”’.⁷⁷ The report perceptively noted: ‘[a] symbiotic relationship exists between Mine Townships . . . and shanty townships’.⁷⁸ Acts of ‘vandalism of houses in Mine townships for window/door frames and roofing materials [were carried out to enable their] sale in the shanty townships’, while ‘shanty townships provide cheap accommodation for unhoused Mine employees, domestic servants, security guards and general workers’.⁷⁹ Strikingly, the research team was initially greeted with hostility in informal settlements when they were thought to be UNIP or government officials: co-operation followed when it became clear that they were from ZCCM. The opposite occurred in the mine townships, whose ‘inhabitants are hostile towards ZCCM officials and property because they believe that the Company has ceased to care about them’.⁸⁰

The report found that women’s programmes and youth development schemes lacked qualified staff and vital equipment; ‘vandalism and thefts . . . have reduced community centres in some townships to shells’.⁸¹ Spending on community services in Nkana and Mufulira had fallen by 33–50 per cent between 1975 and 1986. The report identified that the ‘problem’ of unemployed youths arose from ‘[l]arge families (average size 9) and polygamy [that] mitigate[s] against the provision of effective supervision and guidance of children by parents’.⁸² It recommended that ‘the Company should take measures

⁷⁷ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, ‘ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services’, 1987, p. 12.

⁷⁸ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, ‘ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services’, 1987, p. 13.

⁷⁹ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, ‘ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services’, 1987, p. 14.

⁸⁰ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, ‘ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services’, 1987, p. 14.

⁸¹ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, ‘ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services’, 1987, p. 5.

⁸² ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, ‘ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services’, 1987, p. 7.

to control the number of dependants outside the immediate family to ease pressure on services' and conduct family planning campaigns.⁸³ It also sought the '[s]trict enforcement of the provisions of the Tenancy Agreements' and the '[d]emolition of all illegal structures' in mine townships.⁸⁴

Political Transition and Conflict, 1990–1993

The early 1990s saw a movement for political and economic change sweep across Africa, inspired by the fall of communism but driven primarily by local discontent with the social and political order.⁸⁵ While Zambia experienced a largely peaceful transition from one-party state to liberal democracy, the pro-democracy movement in Zaire was violently suppressed by state forces and derailed by Mobutu's divide-and-rule tactics and the fuelling of ethnic violence.⁸⁶ Zambian Copperbelt actors in general, and its labour movement in particular, were central to the success of the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) in ousting UNIP and establishing a new government led by ZCTU leader Frederick Chiluba. As I have argued elsewhere, the MMD's success was partly built on the successful defence of labour movement autonomy in the 1980s and its ability to resist ethno-regional divide-and-rule was informed by the self-conscious

⁸³ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, 'ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services', 1987, pp. 27–8.

⁸⁴ ZCCM-IH, 6.2.5I, 'ZCCM Study to Investigate Industry Community Services', 1987, p. 17.

⁸⁵ Michael Bratton and Nicolas Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Leonard Villalon and Peter Von Doepp (eds.), *The Fate of Africa's Democratic Experiments* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Gabrielle Lynch and Gordon Crawford, 'Democratization in Africa 1990–2010: An Assessment', *Democratization*, 11, 2 (2011), pp. 275–310.

⁸⁶ For Zambia see Lise Rakner, *Political and Economic Liberalisation in Zambia 1991–2001* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2003) and Miles Larmer, 'Zambia Since 1990: Paradoxes of Democratic Transition', in Abdul R. Mustapha and Lindsay Whitfield (eds.), *Turning Points in African Democracy* (James Currey: Oxford, 2009), pp. 114–33. For Zaire, see Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, 'Democracy, Multipartyism and Emancipative Politics in Africa: The Case of Zaire', *Africa Development*, 18, 4 (1993), pp. 95–118; Georges Nzongola-Ntajala, *From Zaire to the Democratic Republic of Congo* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2004); and William Reno, 'Sovereignty and Personal Rule in Zaire', *African Studies Quarterly*, 1, 3 (1997), pp. 39–64.

cosmopolitanism of Copperbelt political discourse.⁸⁷ The Zambian labour movement, rooted in Copperbelt urban society, was, as a result, able to play a far more significant political role than on the continent in general and certainly when compared with its Congolese counterpart.

While the Zambian Copperbelt was, in late 1991, celebrating the MMD's victory, the mining towns of Haut-Katanga/Shaba were consumed in a growing crisis that would ultimately be resolved only by the armed overthrow of Mobutu in 1997 by Laurent Kabila and his regional backers. Following Mobutu's legalisation of a multi-party system in April 1990, initiatives to bring about democratic change focussed on an opposition-led Sovereign National Conference (CNS) that, however, failed to reach agreement on the country's political future. Zaire's *Gécamines*-dependent economy was, meanwhile, collapsing. Management's attempt to radically reduce costs included a 20 per cent cut in its workforce, but this was, as Rubbers states, 'thwarted by strikes by workers, provoked by the deterioration in their standard of living, and looting, which razed the entire fabric of small and medium-size enterprises in 1991'.⁸⁸ In September and October that year, the central retail areas of Lubumbashi, Likasi and Kolwezi were looted and burnt, in attacks that, it is widely believed, were orchestrated by the Mobutu regime.⁸⁹ Popular opposition was, meanwhile, brutally crushed. In May 1990, security forces killed at least one hundred students at the University of Lubumbashi who were demonstrating for political reform.⁹⁰

Mobutu maintained his precarious hold on power by an increasingly short-term manipulation of mineral wealth and of latent ethnic tensions. When the CNS appointed Étienne Tshisekedi as Prime Minister in August 1992, the opposition had already been weakened by defections from the UFERI (*Union des Fédéralistes et Républicains Indépendants*) party. Prominent UFERI leader Gabriel Kyungu wa Kumwanza was appointed Shaba governor in November 1991.

⁸⁷ Larmer, *Rethinking African Politics*, chapter 7.

⁸⁸ Rubbers, *Le Paternalisme*, p. 47.

⁸⁹ *Mwana Shaba*, 433, November 1991; Dibwe dia Mwembu, 'Historical Knowledge Production at the University of Lubumbashi (1956–2018)', in Larmer et al., 'Across the Copperbelt', pp. 296–320.

⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch, 'Africa, Human Rights Developments, Zaire', 1993: www.hrw.org/reports/1993/WR93/Afw-11.htm (accessed 20 July 2020).

Mwana Shaba, reporting Kyungu's arrival in hagiographic tones, celebrated his appointment as the first governor of local origin in twenty-four years and emphasised

his deep attachment to his region of origin. His determination to defend its interests was not without harsh criticism and even the antipathy of those who considered Shaba as a conquered territory whose tribute had to be taken, whatever the cost. . . . as soon as he got off the plane, he bowed and kissed the ground, a way for him to worship ancestors and express his attachment to the land that nourished him since childhood.⁹¹

Kyungu, having promised to govern Shaba's people regardless of region or ethnicity, unleashed a campaign of intimidation and violence against Katangese residents of Kasaian origin. *Gécamines* was targeted by UFERI militants; thousands of its long-standing workers and their families were forced to flee.⁹² Kyungu also organised unofficial shipments of cobalt to Zambia by Mobutu's *Division Spéciale Présidentielle* (DSP) that provided the presidency with a precious source of revenue.⁹³

For some interviewees such as Thérèse Kyola, this violence marked the end of the company community: 'This has been ever since the period of inter-ethnic conflicts; before, we were all together. With the Katangese–Kasaian conflicts, for example, people started to be afraid of being killed'.⁹⁴ François Kake recalls: 'My wife is from Kasai and with these politicized wars, I could not for example tolerate that people kill my wife or my children. . . . It was difficult to live at that time'.⁹⁵ For others, the communitarianism of this period is explained as a normal human response to crisis, for example by Emile Ngoy Muyondwe:

When there is a crisis, very often we rally around the closest. When the crisis came, I remember there were selected payments, since the money was not enough for everyone. Under these conditions, the officials tended to select their friends, their brothers from the same tribe. We experienced that. The crisis can lead to tribalism.⁹⁶

⁹¹ *Mwana Shaba*, 433, November 1991, p. 2.

⁹² Rubbers, *Le Paternalisme*, p. 47; a harrowing account of their experiences is provided in Dibwe dia Mwembu, *Bana Shaba*, pp. 201–29. See also Gauthier de Villers with Jean Omasombo Tshonda, *Zaire: La Transition Manquée (1990–1997)* (Tervuren-Paris: Institut Africain-L'Harmattan, *Cahiers Africains* 27–29, 1997); and Ch. Didier Gondola, *The History of Congo* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), pp. 156–7.

⁹³ Reno, 'Sovereignty and Personal Rule'. ⁹⁴ Thérèse Kyola interview.

⁹⁵ François Kake interview. ⁹⁶ Emile Ngoy Muyondwe interview.

On both sides of the border, the early 1990s saw the value of cash wages decline drastically and there were periodic food shortages. Philippe Kalenda remembers: ‘We even sold household items like televisions to find food. We traded with villagers from neighbouring villages’.⁹⁷ Farming as a survival measure carried its own dangers: Marie José Kapya Katolo recalls an attempted sexual assault by a soldier in 1992 while she was farming.⁹⁸ Zambian nurse Mary Nomba recalls: ‘people suffered from kwashiorkor, malnutrition and they were brought in the hospital and we fed children from the hospital who had such cases’.⁹⁹ Lesa Kanyanta reports that, as MUZ’s Kitwe Branch Chairman, he negotiated with ZCCM to provide maize meal directly to mineworkers, a reversal of the cash-only wages that had, in the early 1960s, been a symbol of Zambian mineworkers’ modernity.¹⁰⁰

Selling the Copperbelt: Liberalisation and Privatisation

Zaire’s crisis continued throughout the 1990s. Copper production, which had peaked at 538,000 tonnes in 1986, collapsed to just 48,000 tonnes in 1993. Nine thousand workers left *Gécamines* that year as a result of ethnic violence.¹⁰¹ ‘Crisis actions’ necessitated sweeping cuts to *the company’s* social provision: food supplies were significantly reduced and all cultural and sporting events cancelled to address the catastrophic financial situation. The country experienced a 42 per cent decline of GDP per head between 1990 and 1993.¹⁰² Governmental paralysis was resolved only in 1994 with the appointment of Prime Minister Kengo wa Dondo, who had little choice but to accept the World Bank’s plans for restructuring and partly privatising *Gécamines*. Mobutu’s overthrow in 1997 by Katangese leader Laurent Kabila raised hopes that he would revive the province’s economic fortunes. Kabila, however, ceded control of the mining industry to the forces that kept his regime in power once he fell out with his

⁹⁷ Interview, Philippe Kalenda, Likasi, 11 June 2018.

⁹⁸ Interview, Marie José Kapya Katolo, Likasi, 23 June 2018.

⁹⁹ Interview, Mary Nomba, Mufulira, 27 July 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Interview, Lesa Kanyanta, Kitwe, 3 July 2019.

¹⁰¹ IMFA, Executive Board Meeting, 13 November 1992; IMF, ‘Zaire – Recent Economic Developments’, 13 May 1994, p. 4.

¹⁰² IMFA, Executive Board Meeting, 18 December 1995, p. 11.

Rwandan and Ugandan backers in 1998.¹⁰³ Billy Rautenbach's appointment to lead *Gécamines'* 'recovery committee' symbolised the effective mortgaging of the company to Zimbabwean military and business interests. While the company was looted at the top, on the ground *Gécamines'* operations were opened up to artisanal diggers, some themselves former company workers.¹⁰⁴ Rubbers details the return of the World Bank to the DRC in 2001 to oversee the partial privatisation of the company in the early 2000s. This process involved the dismissal of tens of thousands of workers and the dismantling of most of *Gécamines'* remaining social and welfare provision.¹⁰⁵

In Zambia in the early 1990s, the new MMD government, consistent with its own neo-liberal thinking and IFI debt conditionality, implemented one of Africa's most radical economic liberalisation programmes. While many Copperbelt residents believed their democratically elected government would protect the mining industry from political interference, they did not anticipate the generalised decline in living standards that resulted from the removal of subsidies and the privatisation of most state-owned companies. Chiluba's government was praised internationally for its willingness to meet donor demands, but the ultimate test of its neo-liberal credentials would be the privatisation of the mining industry.¹⁰⁶ The IFIs focussed on what they regarded as ZCCM's unduly high social and labour costs:

The [IMF] mission was concerned that the economy as a whole would not benefit from the current high price of copper, but that instead it would be used, as in the past, to subsidize inefficient practices and unduly high labor costs. [It] ... questioned the 25 per cent April wage increase, given the company's very precarious financial situation. ZCCM management responded that ... the unions had viewed the wage award as minimal in the light of inflation over the last year, and that [with] anything less there would have been an intolerable degree of labor unrest. The [IMF] staff representatives emphasised that such actions reinforced the necessity of moving ahead swiftly with the privatization of ZCCM.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Among his measures, Kabila renamed the province officially known as Shaba with the name Katanga.

¹⁰⁴ Cuvelier, 'Men, mines and masculinities'.

¹⁰⁵ Rubbers, *Le Paternalisme*, pp. 49–51.

¹⁰⁶ Rakner, *Political and Economic Liberalisation*, pp. 72–9.

¹⁰⁷ IMF online archives, 'Zambia – Staff Report for the 1994 Article IV Consultation and Midterm Review of Rights Accumulation Program', 9 September 1994.

Privatisation required ‘a program of joint-venturing and divestiture of ZCCM’s under-utilised or unused assets. . . . ZCCM would also reduce its involvement, through a variety of divestiture methods, in housing, transportation, schools, health service facilities as well as in other services which it currently operates’.¹⁰⁸ Early attempts at commercialising Mufulira’s worker canteens foundered on the supposed lack of a commercial mindset among the women recruited to run them: ‘Raw materials were not purchased from the cheapest sources and in short the enterprise did not meet the essential criteria of a viable commercial enterprise. . . . I anticipate that we would encounter the ever present problem of finding a suitably commercially minded person to take charge of the operation’.¹⁰⁹ As this indicates, being modern now meant being entrepreneurial and self-sufficient. The ZCCM publication *Mining Mirror*, covering a crime wave in Luanshya in 1996, proclaimed that the [t]ime for ZCCM to be over-protective of its employees is a matter for the historians. Employees are being asked to take care of themselves’.¹¹⁰ Company withdrawal from social and community service provision was presented as ‘decentralisation’ and ‘empowerment’:

it has been the practice for mining companies to provide community development services and recreational facilities to cater for the welfare of employees and their dependants [and] free housing to employees. However, in line with the changed national perspective, the Company’s present policy is to encourage home ownership. . . . the policy statement aims at encouraging coordinated activity and full participation of communities to enable them [to] contribute fully to national development.¹¹¹

While the sale of company housing to sitting tenants was widely popular among mineworkers, some company officials worried that new homeowners were insufficiently prepared for their new status: as

¹⁰⁸ World Bank online, ‘Memo and Recommendation to IDA for Proposed Credit for Mining Sector Technical Assistance Project’, request P-5496-ZA, 23 May 1991.

¹⁰⁹ ZCCM-IH, 1.5.3F, Running of Mine Recreation Clubs and Canteens at Work Places, 1990–9, J. R. Oliver to M. D. Sichula, Copper Mining Enterprise Trust Ltd, ‘Eating Facilities – ZCCM’, 10 July 1990.

¹¹⁰ *Mining Mirror*, April 1996, p. 11.

¹¹¹ ZCCM-IH, 12.8.8F, Report on the Findings and Recommendations of the Committee on the Future of ZCCM Schools, Hospitals and Other Social Services, ZCCM, July 1996, p. 3.

Nkana's General Manager wrote in 1998, 'no attempt has been made to educate the labour force in the responsibilities and costs associated with home ownership'.¹¹² In the midst of the insecurity created by decline and privatisation, the sale of mine houses provided income via rental or a physical base for a small business. As Mususa explains, this measure radically transformed 'mine' townships: from an area where virtually all heads of household worked in the mines, by 2008 only half of the fifty-six households she surveyed had a resident employed in the formal sector.¹¹³ By such means, many former mine-workers secured a permanent if fragile hold on urban residence that they never had as ZCCM employees, who lost their housing on retirement.

Comparison of the Kaunda era with the Chiluba presidency (1991–2001) provides, for many Zambians, a prism for interpreting the shift from state/company corporatism to democratic individualism, with the acquisition of houses its most prominent symbolic reference. For Simon Kampamba,

Kaunda was a dictator. We did not have a lot of things such as groceries and other stuffs. That is why God chose Chiluba who brought [the] open market and things started coming from other countries. It was during Chiluba's era when I bought this house. The government realised that the houses were too old and needed to be sold to sitting tenants so that they can also own some property.¹¹⁴

Victoria Mwelwa credits Chiluba for the sale of houses and for liberalisation in general: 'During [the] Kaunda era, the government focussed on constructing roads and schools. During Chiluba, we were sold houses. Chiluba focussed on urban places [rather] than rural areas. . . . Through privatisation, Chiluba improved the socio-economic lives of people'.¹¹⁵ Philip Mwape captures the ambiguous impact of liberalisation on many Copperbelt residents, wherein an era of shortages was followed by the availability of commodities for those with money: 'Chiluba improved the transport system. Second, he paved way for people to buy things even

¹¹² ZCCM-IH, 5.1.2I, Sale of ZCCM Houses, 1998, GM Nkana Division C. G. Belshaw to Director HR, 10 March 1998, 'Recovery of Costs for Township Services'.

¹¹³ Mususa, 'Getting By', p. 384.

¹¹⁴ Simon Kampamba interview, 16 July 2018.

¹¹⁵ Victoria Mwelwa interview. Similar sentiments were expressed by interviewee Francis Chanda, 16 July 2018.

from outside. Third, police brutality was stopped when Chiluba came to power and road-blocks reduced. There was now freedom of movement under Chiluba. But money became difficult to access despite availability of goods'.¹¹⁶

Thus, for many interviewees who otherwise decry the loss of the services previously provided by ZCCM, the personal benefits of home ownership and the availability of goods and services are perceived as having improved economic opportunities, if not their actual living standards.

Diverse Memories of the 'Golden Age'

Privatisation was followed by an unanticipated resurgence in mineral demand from China, which drastically reshaped the industry's fortunes. Between 2002 and 2008 copper prices soared, bringing a wave of new investment, the opening of new mines and increased production at others. This did not, however, bring new formal-sector jobs or social provision: contemporary mining technology requires a smaller number of highly skilled workers and this core workforce is commonly combined with outsourcing to sub-contracting companies with significantly worse pay and conditions. In Zambia today, the mining industry, which produced 711,000 tonnes of copper in 2015, employs 28,933 'direct' workers and 27,896 'contract' workers.¹¹⁷ Contemporary mine investors have sought to avoid direct provision of housing and other services and are often accused of favouring foreign contractors over local businesses. *Gécamines* remains an important if much diminished representative of state interests in the Katangese mining industry, while ZCCM-Investment Holdings, which manages the 15–20 per cent state ownership in Zambia's privatised mines, otherwise presides over the unprofitable legacy of the older industry.

This largely 'jobless' boom has shaped political and social change in the region in ways that can only be summarised here. In Zambia, the failure of new mine investors to provide secure jobs and 'care' for their workers fuelled opposition leader Michael Sata's populist political movement. Sata's Patriotic Front (PF), by articulating

¹¹⁶ Philip Mwape interview, 17 July 2018.

¹¹⁷ <https://miningforzambia.com/a-concentrated-mining-sector>; <http://mines.org.zm/employment-figures> (both accessed 22 July 2020).

a contemporary version of an enduring Copperbelt political discourse demanding the equitable distribution of mine wealth, succeeded in capturing the Zambian presidency in 2011.¹¹⁸ Meanwhile, Moïse Katumbi became governor of Katanga province in 2007; he re-established governmental oversight of the anarchic post-war mining industry and created incentives for and restrictions on mine company operations that increased local tax revenues. While avoiding the exclusionary rhetoric of Kyungu, Katumbi nonetheless invoked the Katangese secession by, for example, erecting a prominent statue of Tshombe in central Lubumbashi. While Katangese politicians, like their Zambian counterparts, articulate a collective sense of injustice that wealth produced by their region continues to be enjoyed elsewhere – whether by off-shore mine companies or ruling politicians in distant capitals – such invocations may (in a context where ethnic associations remain central to political mobilisation) reawaken the autochthonous definition of Katangese identity associated with previous waves of anti-Kasaian violence.¹¹⁹ On the Zambian Copperbelt, despite the willingness of the current PF government to deploy overtly ethnic politics, the popular consensus of interviewees remains that the region has never suffered ethnic violence because of its cosmopolitan nature.¹²⁰ These different trajectories reflect the two regions' distinct histories, but equally show how those histories have shaped and been shaped by popular understandings of Copperbelt society that bear only

¹¹⁸ Miles Larmer and Alastair Fraser, 'Of Cabbages and King Cobra: Populist Politics and Zambia's 2006 Election', *African Affairs*, 106, 425 (2007), pp. 611–37; Sishuwa Sishuwa, "'Join Me to Get Rid of This President": The Opposition, Civil Society and Zambia's 2011 Election', in Tinenenji Banda, O'Brien Kaaba, Marja Hinfelaar and Muna Ndulo (eds.), *Democracy and Electoral Politics in Zambia* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 11–33; Guy Scott, *Adventures in Zambian Politics: A Story in Black and White* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2019).

¹¹⁹ Sandrine Vinckel, 'Violence and Everyday Interactions', pp. 78–102; Donatien Dibwe dia Mwembu, 'La Réharmonisation des Rapports entre les Katangais et les Kasaiens dans la Province du Katanga (1991–2005)', *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, 30, 1 (2006), pp. 117–34; Erik Gobbers, 'Ethnic Associations in Katanga Province, the Democratic Republic of Congo: Multi-Tier System, Shifting Identities and the Relativity of Autochthony', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 54, 2 (2016), pp. 211–36.

¹²⁰ Lee M. Habasonda, 'Corruption, Ethnicity and Violence as a Triple Political Strategy: The Changing Face of Politics in Zambia', Institut Français des Relations Internationales (Ifri), September 2018: www.ifri.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/habasonda_zambia_2018.pdf (accessed 21 July 2020).

a tangential relationship to historical reality but which are central to residents' sense of identity.¹²¹

This is the context in which memories of the Copperbelt's history of growth and decline were articulated by our interviewees between 2017 and 2019. Unsurprisingly, many respondents counterpose today's parlous economic opportunities to a prosperous past when mine companies 'provided employment for a lot of people including young people'.¹²² François Batabata Nsenga emphasises the pervasive impact of historical company activities:

At the time, with *Gécamines*, when its workers were paid there was an impact on everyone. . . . With today's mining companies, you don't really feel the impact. . . . *Gécamines* had good hospitals serving the whole population, good schools and good teachers. The current mining company has no schools, hospitals and workers are not paid well.¹²³

Trader Emery Bweupe recalls that the people who bought her goods were 'families of the mineworkers. A lot of people were in employment and there was a lot of money way back'.¹²⁴ André Kasengo characterises the circulation of wages and benefits as a form of social solidarity:

If you had brothers who are *Gécamines* workers, they will share their rations with you! Since *Gécamines* employed a lot of people (35,000 workers), in the event of a crisis, it was all of Likasi that was also hit; but the day that *Gécamines* paid its workers, everyone benefitted; money flowed everywhere.¹²⁵

For Thompson Sichula, privatisation 'has affected my business in many ways. Under ZCCM I used to have contracts with the mines, not now when the process is dominated by foreigners. There is also corruption. Way back we used to apply and the process was transparent, not now, you need strong connections'.¹²⁶

Many interviewees emphasise, like Victoria Mwelwa, the decline of once clean and well-ordered townships: 'Yes, way back it used to be

¹²¹ A brilliant recent analysis asserts that the Zambian Copperbelt's collective discourse of cosmopolitanism and anti-tribalism is itself rooted in a distinctly Bemba sense of identity and values: Robby Kapesa and Tom McNamara, "We Are Not Just a Union, We Are a Family": Class, Kinship and Tribe in Zambia's Mining Unions', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 44 (2020), pp. 153–72.

¹²² Emery Bweupe interview. ¹²³ François Batabata Nsenga interview.

¹²⁴ Emery Bweupe interview. ¹²⁵ André Kabinda Kasengo interview.

¹²⁶ Thompson Sichula interview, 20 July 2018.

very clean but now it has become dirty. Way back they used to even inspect our houses, spray the area. Now they do not take care of the homes and this has increased diseases'.¹²⁷ Others, however, criticise the historical provision of such services:

There was a dependency syndrome on the mines. ... You couldn't buy something as simple as a bulb, you had to call maintenance. Because of that kind of life people were so relaxed they wouldn't do anything but a fraction of things. ... Such simple skills like fixing a light bulb was hard because of such dependency. A lot of our young people still can't develop simple skills to help them think of ways to earn a living.¹²⁸

Pami wa Kasongo, while acknowledging the personal advancement he experienced as a result of mine employment, equally emphasises its constraining nature: 'What I have become is thanks to *Gécamines*. The small investment I made from my salary allowed me to build this house ... [working for *Gécamines*] ... opened my mind and I learned a lot that ... allowed me to escape this mentality of *Gécamines* workers'.¹²⁹ For William Chinda, liberalisation has removed inequality between mineworkers and other residents:

Such [a] type of living made people lazy. Wives to miners just stayed home. Except those in Chibolya, they would work. This time the market is even filled because everybody is a general worker. We had two classes. The miners and then us who weren't part of the mine. Now we are all the same.¹³⁰

Other interviewees analyse lost company services such as youth and women's centres by comparing contemporary disorder with a somewhat romanticised past. Evans Nsabashi, for example, complains about crime and insecurity: 'Long ago we had this extended family which was very helpful and I benefited from it. But now it has been eroded by [a] new culture. That is why in Kaunda's time we did not have street kids but now we have more because of the demise of an extended family'.¹³¹ Bobby Jackson Kabamba argues:

Today, problems are very bad. ... Children of today, because of films and Western culture are very bad; they are not like we used to be when I was a child. Not so many people today have got money, only a few and the few who have got that money are not as helpful as it used to be in the

¹²⁷ Victoria Mwelwa interview. ¹²⁸ Gertrude Dhaka interview.

¹²⁹ Pami wa Kasongo interview. ¹³⁰ William Chinda interview.

¹³¹ Evans Nsabashi interview.

past ... Thereafter, these girls for example are turning to prostitution to make more money and the boys are using odd crooked means of making money.¹³²

Many agree that gender roles have changed, a belief that is commonly predicated on an inaccurate belief that women did not work in the past. Whether this change is for good or ill is, however, a matter of disagreement:

At the time, we felt like men, a father, because there was ease, there were fewer problems at home. It wasn't until the 1990s that everything started to deteriorate. We had food provided by the employer ... But today, this is no longer the case, you have to suffer to find food. ... children in primary school studied for free, all my children went through there. Today, you have to pay ... the father has difficulty meeting all the needs of his household, and I think that he cannot ... call himself a father or a man.¹³³

For Justine Karumb however, the economic disaster that has befallen many *Gécamines* workers has unexpectedly positive effects:

When a person worked at *Gécamines*, he had a good salary. Some may not have been able to manage their wages to cope well with the crisis. Since at *Gécamines* there was schooling for the children of workers, health insurance, supplies, in addition to a good salary. And you could see how the workers used to drink ... But since the crisis, they have mastered themselves to manage well. It was certainly the crisis that had changed their behaviour.¹³⁴

Conclusion

There is, then, no agreement about the meaning or significance of the ending of the corporatist 'golden age' of Copperbelt mining communities, apart from the fact that it has ended. Beyond a consensus that the region has experienced a devastating economic decline and profound social dislocation, respondents disagree about its specific timing, causation and impact on themselves and their communities. Their analysis is, unsurprisingly, affected by their own positionality, personal experience during and since the period of decline and their memory of that history, shaped by their communities and the ways in which this experience has been explained and mobilised by local elites. Residents

¹³² Bobby Jackson Kabamba interview. ¹³³ Emile Ngoy Muyondwe interview.

¹³⁴ Interview, Justine Karumb, Likasi, 23 June 2018.

sometimes highlight common themes in the history of decline both across the Copperbelt as a whole and within its two constituent parts. The enduring exploitation of the region's resources and labour by outside forces is a primary trope in such explanations; those forces may be national political elites or foreign-owned mining companies, but the IFIs that played a major role in dictating macro-economic and company policies over twenty-five years are not today identified as a primary actor in this decline. These narratives are historically significant, not only because they help us understand the period of decline itself, but also because this lengthy period of stagnation, crisis and modest recovery is now as central to the Copperbelt's historical experience as its better-known era of growth and prosperity. Adding it to the historical record then requires a similar attention both to the actual experience of historical decline and to how knowledge about it has been produced, by international and national elites, academics and members of the communities themselves, as this chapter has sought to do.

While interviewees can point out where in Mufulira or Likasi company-run leisure centres used to stand, or identify the health clinics that have now been turned into private bars or evangelical churches, younger Copperbelt residents have grown up in the absence of any such provision. In general, the shadow cast by the industry's past is of little relevance or interest to the region's young adults, for whom mine employment is little more than one potential pathway out of poverty, of no more significance than a career in accountancy or hairdressing. In one important respect, however, the Copperbelt's extractive history remains ever present in the experiences and perceptions of its current (and likely future) communities, as the final chapter will explain.