

Irengé Rukwasha Daniel

THE EVIL OF THE CENTURY.

And if the screams of bullets were silenced...

*To all the souls devoured by the devils of war;
To all displaced persons who have fled hostilities;
To those families who have unjustly lost their loved ones;
To all Congolese this book, a sign of unity and unanimity.*

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INTRODUCTION

One morning, a genesis of atrocities

That morning, I got up early on the white color of my innocence, the green of my ambitions, the black of my essence, and the rose sunk with despair... And yet, as usual, a few kilometers from our home the crackling of bullets could be heard, those cries that were already nicknamed "the village melody" that even Mozart, despite his expertise, could not have conceived of the like.

Emile, here I am, a young fatherless man, son and youngest of my family, tall, thin, with my not very fair complexion which attracted me the big hard pieces to bite into with the young flowers of the countryside since all the other young people in the area hung around on the sidewalks of the main roads which serve the¹cities, some of them have returned to the army and are fighting night and day at the fronts for this invaded piece, this mortgaged piece...

The others at the bistros around palm wine, and we still sometimes in the fields, sometimes on our farms and even many young teenage girls ran to the foyer, all this to signify that the school seemed to no longer exist since our attacking neighbors invaded certain regions in the east of the country.

Even our parents who used to get us up very early from our beds and hurry us to put on our blue and white in a hurry to be at school on time, seemed to have already forgotten its existence; and even the teachers seem to have gotten rid of their professorial arsenal by throwing away the books with which they blindly disturbed us. The community suffers from it, the village has now been transformed into a mob of young illegal immigrants, moreover and those who have them are of no use to us except for their dueling shows that we attend every evening when

¹Rebel group from Rwanda and Uganda under the label of M23 and ADF for several years in the eastern Congolese territories.

they are drunk, or except for their blackmail that stupefies the youngest in need of good examples. We all have tears in our eyes when a kid who wants to finish primary school has trouble writing his name correctly, counting from one to a hundred, and all he knows is the name of the President of the Republic who had offered them a gift, this free primary school² which some teachers today call a "poisoned chalice."

I, personally, was managing in this period of political and cultural crisis by looking for our teachers, especially those of languages and exact sciences for evening classes and who demanded from me in terms of tuition a few kilograms of beans, nothing gave me hope that I could pass my state exam peacefully despite the military clashes, I was only playing with my faith. I was doing well at the same time as they were lamenting the non-collection of their salary envelope by the State and this gave each of them the nerve to plunge the emblem of the country into the ocean of misfortune and "it's not going well", what a shame!

- Emile, it is late, son, we have to be in the fields. My mother called out to me, knocking tenderly on my bedroom door.

I stretched out my arms, put the bedspread back properly, turned off my lamp and joined Mom in the hallway where she was waiting for me. "Here, this is your breakfast, hurry up darling" Mom said to me with a loving smile. So, I hurried to finish my cheese pate and the little roll that I had left, the day might be long since we have too much to harvest today.

A few moments later, we headed to the fields in a line with the other women of the village who were worried about the new security situation in the region.

- Yesterday, one of them said, I couldn't sleep a wink all night, the bombs fell like rain and I had the strong impression that they were raining on my roof.

- Yes, it was so serious for me, me who lives like any single woman because my husband comes home late every day with nothing and very

²Promise made by President Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo during the 2018 election campaign and which was introduced on January 24, 2020.

drunk. Yesterday he was snoring in another world when I was worried about the situation.

My mother alone did not have to argue, she seemed to know nothing and it was she who urged us to walk quickly as if we were also going to the front. Ten steps later, when a woman in our procession was lamenting and expressing her shock at the government in place, we heard a few more bombs and this time it was very close to us, about 10 km south of Kanyabayonga in Birundule. A moment later, as if it were a racetrack, or a game of hide-and-seek, I don't know, everyone took their corner with their belongings over their heads in the direction of the road that served the city of Goma. Cries, miserable cries echoed in the walls of the forest. These women, all began to tremble, no longer knew how to walk, but despite everything we had to follow in the footsteps of the others who were fleeing the place, that is how we left our Kanyabayonga 3.³

On the road, it was no longer possible to distinguish between women, young people or children, everyone became athletic, even my mother, despite her sixties, was pawing the ground like a mare in full race. Public transport refused to take us to the city, we were charged colossal prices compared to the normal price we paid in peacetime. We found ourselves the only ones still on the main road, I felt so sorry for the children who were crying at the top of their lungs and looking for their parents without hope of finding them. Even the women we were with did not know where their parents were, they scrunched up their faces, their eyes were wet, their looks depressed and the words that came out of their mouths were dressed in real lamentations. We walked a few more meters until we reached a bend where we saw a van parked on the sidewalk. We all sat down in front of his windshield and the man inside was seized with pity, surely or perhaps because of these women who already had lines of tears on their cheeks.

³Locality in the territory of Lubero in the province of North Kivu in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It was under the control of the M23 in early June 2024

- Please dad, please help these poor war displaced people. Draw your generous attention to us who, in the morning, lived like any other being, but this evening disaster-stricken, homeless and without even the means to flee from all these cries of bombs that deafen us. Was the plea of my mother with tears that flowed in abundance.

The driver did not harden his charitable heart, he asked us to get on board so that he could drop us off a few kilometers from Goma.

It was a miracle for us, we were the last of the displaced crowd and the driver said that he had several responsibilities in Sake and that is where he had to leave us. What would be our thanks? All the French vocabulary had to do in our mouths precisely to thank him, and the angel left.

As it was a little late and we had to go 11 kilometers to reach the camp for displaced persons in Mugunga, we decided to camp in a compound that looked like a pasture. We settled there in a jumble; we made a mess of homeless people. It was almost six o'clock and the atmosphere was already getting dark, our beds and all our belongings were laid on the ground and with the help of a few sheets we wove miserable tents in which we would have to spend some rough nights. And as misfortune does not come alone, before we had even finished weaving our tents the police officers seized our stable and asked us to clear out. "This place is not an asylum for the poor displaced by war, follow the others to the Mugunga camps. We are all suffering from the pain of this dead country, get out quickly!" shouted one of the law enforcement officers.

- Please excuse us, Dad, my mother begged, we have come a long way fleeing the war, being tired, grant us this privilege of spending just this night in your compound and tomorrow we will turn back...

- No way, get your gear quickly before I scare you...

- But, am I even as old as your mother, if you do not have pity on us anyway Grant me that preeminence that an old woman of my age, your mother, can have.

The man didn't say a word this time, he raised his hand as if to tell us that he didn't want any justification and that we should leave the place

at his slightest wish. I had great empathy for my mothers who were already pitiful and didn't know how to walk anymore, so this test of walking on foot tonight to the Mugunga camp where the others live, will they make it? I was the only man among them, it was involuntarily my task to raise their morale so that we could reach the place before nightfall.

Our ambition was impossible and very difficult, after crossing the forbidden concession we decided to recamp in an abandoned house and there we spent a terrible night with these flies that nibbled us, lots of vermin that soon inhabited our sheets, but after all the trouble, we reached dawn and we took the road again on foot.

We noticed imminent human traces that told us that several had taken this path, certainly, above the mountain we saw a crowd of displaced people who followed each other like ants, I easily recognized my friend Lucien through his t-shirt that only left his skin when he dressed up, with his mother, his little brothers were holding on tight and for the others we had to stop dawdling to join them and create an empathetic friendship. Sometimes these women who moaned, sometimes these children who moped, or these young people who chattered political stories.

- What is true, I accept a disgrace in me for all the esteem that once engendered the lively joy of being called "Congolese", Lucien said, already several decades our elections are only fool's games where we vote, but the future leaders have long been known in the political corridor. For me, we had thought of a democratic and civilized alternation but what alternation? We replaced a void with a hole and it is the same government of the "ventriotes" which returns to power...

I didn't know why Lucien was so angry with the government in place, although personally I thought it was more of a problem of treason within the army since the presidency seemed to be making no effort to free the part under the control of the attackers. "Lucien, why give all the trouble to the government in place? Don't you see in this affair annals of treason? " He looked me straight in the eyes, with a slight anger he said to me:

- Brother, one must be blind, deaf and even stupid to affirm your hypothesis. Didn't you follow your president on television during the election campaigns attracting the naive saying that at the slightest skirmish he will bring together the two chambers to declare war on his counterpart? And if you want other reminders, in his first five-year term he said he was going to settle in the east of the country provided that peace returned there, and after having had his second five-year term he comes back to contradict his specious promise saying that he is not obliged to reside in the east for peace to return there. Dear Congolese until when will you continue to believe in Santa Claus? Until when will you stop hanging around under your mattresses? Dear black sheep...

Lucien seemed to say everything and purify his mind, and despite his preaching I remained firm and categorical in my opinion. Our mothers no longer participated in these kinds of discussions, they were tired, according to them, of washing the pig.

Towards the homeless chaos...

After walking too much, we saw white tents up close without even asking, we knew that this was where we were heading. It was the nature of the camp that smiled at us with fantasy, its language was so clear that even its ironic tone pulled from our memories everything pleasant that one could think of.

An awkward man came to our reception and called himself the head of the camp with his sandals without soles and which seemed to be demanding their independence since then, his shirt whose color could no longer be guessed, his pants tiredly holed and then woven from the raffia threads. His wet eyes were frightening and his face doubtfully affirmed to us that he was welcomed in a good light. Even so, he greeted us, asked us in turn for our names to register us and calmed us down in front of his office while he handed us a few tents.

- Apparently you are the last crowd coming from Kanyabayonga, the man told us with a pitiful smile. And we all answered "yes" in echo as if it was the end of the war and the attackers will no longer seize other territories.

After he took leave of us, I then noticed the inhuman conditions in which the displaced people live. In a camp of more than five thousand households with no drinking water, the children are always dirty from hair to toe as if they came straight from a hole fertile in dust and vermin, the old people are slightly lying on the ground with a pitiful air, the young girls are as dirty as the young boys and these ones did not give any difference compared to their mothers since all of them wore bacon on their small breasts. It was the chief of the camp who explained this phenomenon to us when we were setting up our tents that since the arrival of these girls from other villages that were invaded before Kanyabayonga in this camp, they do not find any work that can occupy them since even the school no longer exists. So, they give themselves

gifts to these sexual Gargantua and they consume them with greed because they are of a Pantagruelian quantity. Now even 13-year-old girls already know how to breastfeed and all have socks instead of breasts on their chests. What a catastrophe!

Also, the hygienic conditions are unfavorable, the toilets and bathrooms have neither door nor roof, we sneak in with a small loincloth when we want to take a bath, here at least the traditional social class is almost banished, the untouchables and the most fearsome of the village also get by with the little nothing that the State distributes to the displaced. I wondered if Lucien will always complain about the government during this time that he is totally at its mercy.

Some dishes, pots, sheets, lamps, and any other objects necessary for our basic needs were offered to us and thus we began our life in the camp.

The sweet smell of our new tent enchanted us, he served us a twenty-liter container of oil, two empty containers to store drinking water, two pots, a bag of rice, a bag of flour and another bag of beans. "You are lucky, yesterday two non-governmental organizations came to our aid, with my foresight I have planned more than a hundred kits for the new ones who can surprise us. If not, the old ones here were already biting the dust, even the government was no longer providing sufficient quantities for their survival. " Said the chief, and through our nod as if to affirm our attention, he continued:

"Imagine today the country has 7.3 million displaced persons including 6.9 million in the eastern provinces alone without counting those who die following difficult situations that they endure in different camps. See that the government has an unforeseen burden that is added overnight, we do not know the territories that will be occupied again by the rebels to multiply the number of displaced persons from war. So, my dears, yes you have found a shelter where to lay your heads but do not expect everything you need from the hand of the State, I assure you it is thin, stingy and puny, it only gives when it expects an arrow back. You understood everything during the electoral campaign, the displaced persons from war were the best rocked babies and the most coaxed by any candidate who wanted to get popularity, even the presidential

candidates also with their qualities duped these poor unfortunates and reassured them of good living conditions, and even another one went far to the point of saying that he will end the war in six months. Oh my God, a war that has already taken more than two decades and the seeker of power promises to end it in six months once he is in power. Isn't this antinomy of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees to want to demolish a villa that took thirty years to build and rebuild it in just three days.

My young brothers, be of service to your old mothers, go to the city, work there and come back with the little you have found. Do not be those young people who spend days here flirting with their displaced sisters and here are the consequences now it is difficult to distinguish mothers from daughters." And he left telling us that he had many fish to fry.

The chief's homily had a place not only in my head, but also in my spirit and took all my conviction. I was then at the point of making the resolution to go and insinuate myself into the city of Goma and even carry out high-risk work there provided that our life was peaceful because they say that there are no such things as job titles, there are only foolish people. I could no longer think about the livestock that we had left, nor about our fields, much less about our harvests that we should sell in town and get several bills but which perish in the fields or are downright consumed by the rebels, it has always been said, one can sleep rich and wake up poor, just as one can sleep poor and wake up rich. Time is a matter of destiny, the day of birth is never chosen by the one who is born, nor is the day of death by the one who dies, and before coming into the world one spends nine months of waiting in the womb of the mother and it is a whole family that languishes the arrival of the newborn, but to leave the world, to die, it takes only a second of precision, what an injustice! My suggestion to God would be to grant us another nine months of reprieve to warn us of the approaching death and to say goodbye to our loves.

While I was philosophizing with myself on my stool, I heard the voice of a woman, perhaps an old woman, who was whining in front of our tent, she was crying for her son, the only one left, she was asking every

passer-by or newly displaced person if they had not seen her son in the new crowd.

"My son would then be dead! Oh my God, why only us this fatality? You have just torn away the one and only child I had left, so come and kill me too, I no longer have the will to live, God, you hated me, I am the hated one, the unfortunate one." said the woman to the melody of her steps. Her words made my mother cry, I was shocked to hear such lamentations again from an old woman. My mother asked me to welcome her into our tent and I did as she asked.

She was an old woman aged all over, the wrinkles in her skin lacked delicacy, her mouth contained only about sixty teeth, without shoes, her feet seemed to trample snakes, even scorpions, I believe if she were a mother-in-law her daughter-in-law would have nicknamed her "witch" because her whole appearance would reflect her ancestors.

- Grandma, my mother said, how long have you been here? Where is your tent?

She shed a few more tears before she replied.

"I have been here for a week, I have no tent, I refused to rest, to eat, or to drink, until my son returns. I spend my nights at the foot of the mountain and will not leave until my youngest son returns."

We were all shocked by her answer, a whole week without eating? A woman her age? This was my mother's first question without delay and the old woman answered:

- Nothing is more precious than a child, you are a woman you know what I am saying, I guess you are calm here without lamentation because you see your son there, he was the only one I had left, he made my old age rejuvenate, he worked to feed me and keep me happy.

My mother bowed her head as if to reason and then asked me to serve the old woman, but she refused our gift and told us that she needed nothing, angrily, as if our gift would be an insult to her, she probably left our tent and did not want to come back to us.

- My son, I have always told you, no person in the world will see your value as your mother, not even your wife, your children perhaps. You see the example of a woman who dies for her missing son, for her losing her son is losing her life. As long as your parents are still alive seek to satisfy them, to honor them, and even in the Bible it is the only commandment with promise, your blessing or your curse depends on them, be careful son.

After these didactics, I took the option of finding myself any job in the city, but before maturing my thought I rushed to associate my friend Lucien with it but his skepticism always made him walk on the same footing. He vituperated everything I wanted to put forward by his desire to always want to be right even when he is wrong.

- Emile, I am not someone who is too much in this country. If the government will not be able to take care of us, the fruits of hostilities, it only has to resign and leave the place to the strongest...

I wondered if this answer really had anything to do with my axiom, I was convinced that my friend had lost his mind, he was thinking like an illiterate person, all that remained in him were popular words, words from the street.

- Lucien, seeking one's well-being has nothing to do with the political state of the country. How long will we be dependent on humanitarians, on the government, who offer us necessary goods sometimes in abundance, sometimes sparingly? Since the village I depended on no one, it would not be in the camp that I would learn to depend on the ambulant.

- Too bad brother, we are not in the village, we will be served everything, in the same way that we were charitably welcomed.

This time, I took my leave of him without speaking too much. I realized that to discuss with a madman, you also have to be one first. The opportunity was then to go there alone, I rushed into the tent to say goodbye to the mother and enjoy a maternal prayer. She was not ready to let go of my hand, the processions of tears created a traffic jam on her face, she begged me to come home every evening, not to envy the girls there, not to touch what does not belong to me, to live well with the city

dweller because they are different. She kissed me for a long time and finally I left. With each step away from her my heart beat, my blood cooled, but the decision was to go and get something to feed her, to clothe her, to make her joyful and happy like a child.

A few meters from the camp was the bus stop for the city, I hurriedly boarded a bus telling the conductor to drop me off at the Virunga market. "Yes, five hundred francs sir", I reached the bottom of my dry pockets and I came back with my five hundred francs which were alpha and omega to me, I gave them to the conductor.

I was selling food products during peacetime at the Virunga market, many people know me there. Everyone on the bus only talked about war news, some were worried about the situation, others said that it was time to invest and make big projects by lending a helping hand to the attackers. "Look, your generals, your colonels, to name only them, even the lowest-ranking soldiers are today paying themselves enormous concessions in Kinshasa or abroad, my hypothesis is clear and verified by the fact that our army has always retreated and never recovered even an invaded territory. The rebels offer them colossal sums and they give up territories."

The driver's argument was welcomed by his customers, especially his mothers who have no joy in the face of the military, especially the police, because according to them, they threaten them every evening when they also want to look for something to feed their sons by spreading spices and other goods of lesser value on the side of the road. A man who seemed the most educated among us, woke up from his silence to address the women who were lamenting the military.

- That is why you are plunging the country into mud, as long as you do not know how to distinguish between roads and markets, will you claim that something is right in your heads? The road is reserved for rolling vehicles, the sidewalks for pedestrians, and the footbridges for people who want to go from one side to another. Do you find a place for the market?

Silence fell, the women I thought were talkative no longer dared to speak, nevertheless the man was telling the truth, we have instilled in

ourselves a mentality that is slowly eating away at us. Already the sidewalks are used as markets, in the city the trees are replaced by billboards, the avenues no longer have roads, much less gutters, the plots of land become impossible to find until in the cemetery the dead of yesteryear are dug up to plant factories there... And perhaps tomorrow the beer will be fermented in the church, the pigs will be raised in the mosque.

When the bus dropped us off, I recognized a few people I had seen for ages, first Mama Fatu whom I had already seen in conflict with her clients and Papa Mubila who was dying of laziness on his bundle. When she saw me, she rushed to kiss me with so much pity, she already knew that it was war that we were digging, she attracted the attention of the world around us.

- Oh Emile, are you in Goma? How is mom? Is she alive?

She asked me a series of questions about our condition and the condition of the village, gave me a seat and asked the manager of her store to buy me a nice cold beer.

- Explain to me a little what you are doing here in town, Émile, asked Mama Fatu.

I didn't know what to say, but I agreed anyway that I had come to find another way to live, to satisfy my mother. She was seized with anguish, as if she was putting herself in my place, she saw that I dreamed of reaching the moon so I could still fall on the stars.

- What work are you going to do here?

- A simple tank top at the market, in the evening I can come back with an amount that can satisfy the minimum needs.

- I am afraid that you will rush to a livelihood without bread. I could take you here as a manager myself, but I already have some. But I promise to help you if you need me, just wait until I serve my customers.

I was watering my neck with my cold beer which was shivering in my hands, the customers were coming and going, Mama Fatu was collecting as many tickets as needed, a moment later she came back to me, she

asked me to quickly finish my coffin so that she could go and register me at the dockers' office.

- But the pay is not always satisfactory. You will be rather happy if you do not indulge too much in alcohol, in the girls' rooms of the market perhaps you will be able to return to the camp each time with large bills...

The head of the dockers took my name, and asked me to come tomorrow to start working. He told me about the rules to follow, the attitudes towards customers and all other disciplines that fit the profession. I faithfully thanked Maman Fatu for her service, she turned to me again and said: "You're welcome, Émile!"

She led me to a shop, asked me to take two bags with me, one of rice and the other of beans, she led me to the door after hers and asked me to choose a nice dress for mom, two pairs of pants for me, slipped me a few bills in my pocket that I hadn't counted. "Have a good trip Emile, greetings to mom, see you tomorrow."

I was too moved by her heart of gold, I remained a few more minutes standing on me and watching how she moved away from me. Shortly after, I came back to myself, I took a quarter of an hour to look for a bus, I don't know why, all refused to drop me off at Mugunga. It was a little later that I had a good Samaritan who agreed to drop me off a hundred meters from where I wanted, I had no choice, I got on board with my packages. Before I even placed my buttocks on his chair, he asked me:

- What are you going to do in Mugunga? People were dying there like crazy during the morning. The driver said.

I pretended I didn't hear anything yet, I thought he was talking on the phone, and for the second time he answered his question.

- Die? Why? I don't know anything dad!

- Bombs were dropped in the displaced persons camp and so far, the radio reports several dead and several injured.

I remained planted in my chair, my mouth had no saliva, a large arrow cut my heart and I felt as if my soul was leaving my body. "My mother" is the only person who came to mind, please, let me find her alive.

I already began to pray inwardly, to make the creed, to repent but my prayers went round in circles and only came back to where I started. To sense that the Eternal God was too far from me, that he did not listen to any of my words, at one point I could no longer deceive my faith to pray without any unity of hope. I begged the driver to drive at breakneck speed maybe I could find my mother alive. That's when he understood that I was also displaced, he could not understand my gestures, my emotions, the sweat that came out of me everywhere. He tried to console me, to say that my mother would not be hit by the bombs, and if she was hit then she is injured and not dead.

We didn't even reach the camp, we already saw the blood that colored the asphalt, and even the sky was sad, the displaced people had all fled the camp and were now settling on the main road. My driver was seized with empathy and pain to the point of letting me go without paying, and besides, it was he who gave me some charity money and he left. I unloaded my bags and clothes in a shop next door and then I began to understand the situation. We see wounded children, fetuses on the ground covered in blood and the bodies of mothers lying nearby lifeless. The music is unique, the cries of tears, I wondered what was the real point of fleeing the death that invades one's house to go and die at the neighbor's. At that moment, the environment really gave the image of hell, I thought I was in the slaughterhouse while to my right I saw a multitude of people's heads detached from their trunks and through imprudence I was going to trample the intestines that were lying on the sidewalk, I have never seen such a tragedy.

As I walked forward, I saw someone I could no longer recognize coming towards me shouting in my name...

- Emile, stop Emile!

It was when he was close to me that I saw that it was Lucien, he had become completely different. He was no longer the Lucien, he had lost weight, with red or multi-colored eyes, torn clothes, bare feet, his hair

was covered in blood... Without him starting what he had to tell me, I understood, I was on the verge of fainting but I became deranged when he confessed to me that all our mothers died following the danger caused by the bombs dropped. He begged me not to get too used to it because I might die. "No one has found the bodies of his people, all you can see is ashes everywhere."

I was at the end of my Latin, I saw the world too small, I had only my eyes to cry with and if it had not been for my masculine strength I would have lost my memory, and in order not to soften in the face of Lucien's stubbornness, I held on as well as he did.

That day was the darkest of my life, even if dying was not a solution but still I missed my mother enough. Nostalgic memories invaded me from time to time, as my mother rocked me: "My son, you are and you will be all that can console me on this earth, how beautiful you are, how cheerful you are, even in your old age you will be strong and courageous. You were your father's beloved, he was also a ploughman that all the women in the village wanted him for a husband..."

Sometimes also his words came back to me unconsciously: "When you are grown up, I will teach you the custom, but now apart from the custom, keep his words and will serve you all your life: you will not neglect anyone despite their social class, their group of belonging, their tribe, their religion or their opinion because consciously or unconsciously anyone can be useful to you at any time. You will not adhere to any movement that does not preach the divine word and wisdom because the only thing that will make you salutary in the eyes of the world is your meeting with the Eternal God. You will not return evil for evil, be gracious. You will not steal, you will be satisfied with your bread, be humble. You will not despair, you will not lower your hand despite the fight, be brave. And as for your future married life, you will marry one and only one woman, you will not divorce, you will not trust the tribe or any origin to take in marriage the one you your heart will love, nevertheless, I impose only these criteria on you: that she be first of all a Christian because her prayer will fill you with grace and abundance. That she be kind, approachable and charitable because she will be the mother of your dynasty and in her our family will be reborn

because you are the only fruit of your father. That she is not too beautiful in face, nor in stature rather too beautiful in heart because her external beauty will make you run into many dangers and you will die before the time...

From the important to the necessary

Days passed, the camp had recovered. Since then I had not gone to town for work, and my friend Lucien was still feeding on his political embarrassment and usually offered his false words to whoever wanted them. I wanted to go to town but last night when he was distributing the tokens to us, the chief forbade us from going out on the pretext that the humanitarians and other charitable groups would come to visit us and that no one should leave the camp because those who were absent would not be served. In the morning, when I came out of my tent, I saw below the mountain a line, like a wedding procession, of vehicles and I was convinced that the humanitarians were there. But to my great surprise I saw only vehicles, and our humanitarians here use off-road jeeps, and even these vehicles bore no sign showing that they belonged to any other organization. I then turned towards Lucien's tent to greet him.

- My brother, he said to me, I am still amazed by the nature of the Congolese people...

Before he went on I laughed out loud as if to say that I knew that politics would never come out of his mouth, he would be better off being a journalist or even a politician, he was always aware of something every morning.

- Brother, don't laugh, the Congolese are real shit bags, take a little notice of what I'm going to tell you. Do you see this procession at the bottom of the mountain? I moved my head as if to accept.

All these people are city dwellers, still big guys from there. But they come here to get bags of food and go stock their shops and the others to stock up on supplies in their homes, and what infuriates me is the fact

that they receive more than the needy, I think the camp leaders must explain this phenomenon well.

This time, Lucien's man was right, I found that sometimes he had patriotic concerns but that he expressed them badly, he had a taste for the truth but he had no one to support him.

- Besides, yesterday evening when we were handing out tokens, these same vehicles were preventing us from passing, a huge traffic jam surrounded the mountain and shortly afterwards we saw big fish with big bellies getting out of these vehicles, still laughing out loud as if they were at the bank, unaware that it was the gift of the common people that they were flitting around and that it was a deadly poison that they were giving to their families.

Lucien led me to understand how things were going and I began to realize little by little what he was criticizing, but we didn't spend long on this subject, we went to blend in with our fellow human beings, the displaced. And, it was the head of the camp who led the meeting:

- Dear friends, be polite and behave like a grown-up. Soon the visitors will arrive, they tell me they are a few meters from here. As I told you last night, whoever is not present will not receive his package, okay? He shouted into the large crowd.

Lucien wanted to ask his question about these vehicles that surround the mountain but I asked him to stay calm and observe first, for fear that by putting his mouth in this matter he might run the risk of running into a fatality brought about by his rivalry with the chief, fortunately he understood me.

A few moments later, we saw people who, compared to us, seemed to have just come from Europe, but our camp leader among them seemed like a stain of dirt since he was as dirty as any camper. They took out their cell phones, their cameras and took pictures. The children all wanted to be in it, even the shortest ones asked their fathers to wear them around their necks to be in it. Tons of bags were unloaded, cans of oil, boxes of medicines mixed together. Lucien had a great time and whispered in my ear: "Brother, this is the work of a serious government,

we should be taken care of and not have to go and fend for ourselves in town, it's crazy."

I looked at him silently with contempt as if to admit that he was still the same idiot I had always known.

The visitors were already getting us excited, and it was the most senior of them who spoke:

- Dear compatriots, the whole world is moved by the situation that the eastern part of the country is going through and particularly you, the war displaced. And we, humanitarians and charitable groups, are all united to support you both materially and financially and try to alleviate the disarray that is weighing us down. You know it well, it is you who fed us and without you the city is in famine, we are very grateful for your work in the fields that watered our cities and now we are longing for your return before your brothers here in the city die of hunger.

Our condolences to all the families affected by the disaster of last month, to all the people who lost their loved ones in this hellish war and know that we are and always will be with you!

I say and I thank you!

The audience raised an uproar that deafened the visitors, it was a female voice, the village elders were surprised, you all know that in our villages women often do not have the aplomb to express themselves in front of a mass of men, at least in the city women are emancipated.

Our visitors did not hang around, they have work to do, they have to get back to the city. The packages were left with the camp leader and he told us that he would go tent by tent to distribute them. Lucien and I understood the leader's maneuver because we could still see the procession below the mountain.

We each received a bag of rice, beans, flour, some basic medicines, and a can of oil, that was enough. Lucien and I had not stopped following the movements of the chief, when he saw that everyone was locking themselves in their tents to cook, he came with a van that took everything that was left, and this, equivalent to half of everything that was offered to us. This was sent to our begging bosses and it seems that

they gave him a small sum of money for everything. Lucien was going to faint because he was counting only on philanthropic aid and not on his own efforts. At least I knew that I would not eat rice and beans every day because when I returned from the city I could buy as much food as I wanted. He still did not agree with me on this point, he remained categorical.

The next morning, I was already getting ready for the city for the whole day, fortunately Mama Fatu was at her shop I would not fail to plead my excuse. She welcomed me again well as usual and without wasting time she brought me straight to the office, the others were already starting to unload.

- There are eight trucks to unload, son, get to work. The president of the dockers told me.

Mama Fatu hugged me and went about her business. The president came back to me again and whispered in my ear: "five dollars per truck son, that's enough, right?" I pulled my smile from the simple mental calculation of multiplying by five, eight times five is forty, the forty dollars that were not going to find me sitting in the camps, and besides with that money I can meet my remaining needs even for a month.

The other dockers already noticed that I was new and my courage attracted their curiosity about me, especially when I told them that I was displaced by the war and that I was camping in Mugunga, they even had to embrace me and salute my three-haired bravery:

- But, Émile, you are an exception, eh, several displaced persons have become a public burden, it seems that being displaced is synonymous with not working, said one of them who was called Zairians.

- Yes brother, said Raymond, these days the sidewalks of the city have become impassable. Here children spend the night there, there women lie down and breastfeed their little ones. You can no longer take a step without a child under six years old carrying on his back a child under one year old and giving his hand to another child of about three years old and who all hold out their hands to you even asking you for a small note to pay for appetizers or even cheaper juice commonly called here

"bitchupa"⁴which only costs a hundred francs to make the smallest one drink...

- Me, explained the other one whom I did not yet know, I had goosebumps the day before yesterday when a seven-year-old boy came to beg here at the market and I took the opportunity to ask him a few questions, I swear to you that my heart had cooled down noticeably: "yes, I am alone here in Goma, my big brother and I came home from school very early because there were no classes, usually we found our parents in the plot peeling the products that they would go and sell in town, but that day, the plot was completely empty, no product had been peeled and we did not know if our parents were there because the calm, the unusual reigned. When we entered the hut, we found the bodies of our parents lifeless lying on the ground, they had been torn apart by knives that were still dragging in their flesh like candles in a cake. Great was our terror, our anguish and even our melancholy, and, before we could swallow this fact, two soldiers who were apparently hiding behind the hut burst inside, they shot at the ceiling and we all slept on the floor. My big brother decided to act as an elder, he began to cry loudly asking the attackers not to touch only his little brother, so me, he would not like to see him die or suffer any harm, he confided that he is close to being killed but that his little brother remains intact. I made the tears flow in torrents for the pleasure first of having such a responsible brother capable of sacrificing himself for his loved one and then for the pain of losing my brother for my salvation.

One of the two soldiers aggressively asked me to run away from the place, I looked at my brother for the last time, all our eyes were wet with tears and a great void was created between us, my heart was beating hard, I was not ready to leave him, I would rather die with him but he begged me to leave the village quickly and head to Goma, he asked me to never forget this day, to forgive our enemies, and to always hope in God because with him everything is possible, he finally kissed me and the soldiers pushed me outside threatening to kill me if I did not leave. I ran without respite, a few meters away I heard my brother's

⁴Frozen juice derived from mixing water and powdered juice.

voice shout "very far away", then they fired at him, one bullet, two bullets, three, and the fourth that I listened to from afar. "

Silence reigned during the story, everyone was seized with empathy, we wondered how this child manages to live until today with all this history in him, even if the Bible tells us that vengeance is God's, what will prevent this child from taking revenge regardless of his degree of Christianity? Would he really have a good heart towards these neighbors who could in the coming days repent and demand new solid diplomatic relations? We do not know, in my opinion such a version of events can never be erased from the memories of those who lived it, future generations could also refuse all diplomacy even if they were promised paradise.

The work continued, at the end of the day we managed to unload everything, the president called us into his office and gave us each his forty dollars. We were satisfied despite the fatigue that was eating away at our bones. But we are told that such work does not exist every day, it is sometimes once or twice in two weeks because these goods come from far away and they take several days on the way.

Before going to the camp I went to Mama Fatu's shop to tell her my fortune, I took out a note to thank her for her assistance and she accompanied me to the stop. I could not buy raw meat or fish for fear that the smell of cooking would attract challenges that could bury me because if the villagers decide to attack you they do it seriously until you find that even Satan is good. I bought minced meat, pieces of chicken at the supermarket and I hid them at the bottom of my bag which contained vegetables, it will last me for a week.

I told my fortune to Lucien, I thought that by telling him that I had managed to earn all this sum in one day he would be able to be seduced and follow me tomorrow, but, to my great astonishment he remained insane and firm in his decision not to work, fortunately he did not dare ask me for money, he started again with his political intrigues:

- Emile, times are hard, today on the radio they reported the advance of the rebels and curiously I wonder what use we have of all these munitions, fighter planes that we possess, all the mercenary armies and

even these famous reservists called "Wazalendo"⁵. We have never been told about the takeover of the formerly occupied territories, so in short, the whole of Congo is leaving under the rule of foreigners.

I tried to explain to him that I am not too involved in politics and I have no ambition to sit in the seats of politicians. To which he castigated, in return he retorted angrily:

- If you don't take care of politics, politics will take care of you, they say. And these are the people who voted to "consolidate the gains" and you really consolidated them. During his first five-year term, you were all aware that the only things we had acquired were war, growing insecurity, economic poverty, underemployment and professional unemployment until everyone became a stuntman. These are the gains that you wanted to proudly consolidate with him and they have become so solid that you will no longer be able to melt them down so that we can return to the normal situation of things.

- Oh Lucien, let's not talk too much to beat around the bush, tell me what remedy you propose to the central power

- First, you have to know that what we are experiencing today has a distant genesis. And our situation that we are swallowing up overnight I call it "The evil of the century". Before the beginning of the century, precisely in the years 96-97, the entire country fell into the hands of foreigners. Even within the army, the government, the civil services there was no shortage of five or six foreigners that your so-called hero had brought us here and that is the beginning of the misfortune. We had welcomed them well, we had given them land for their herds, women and now they have settled in to dominate us. At the time of the referendum, the country seemed to find a lasting peace, the economy was stable that the beans were idle that were thrown to the pig, and I remember every time we made big mistakes and the parents wanted to punish us they imposed on us a small quantity of beans that we had to finish and no one managed to take even half, everyone feared this punishment. But, today beans are more expensive than meat, do not be

⁵"Wazalendo" so to speak in French "patriots", the wazalendo are former rebels who, having become useful for the M23, notably because of their knowledge of the terrain, have become auxiliaries of the Congolese army.

surprised, this is what your "people first", your "at the slightest skirmish I declare war", the same "consolidate the gains" has done to your country. Nevertheless, the harm that his predecessor had done is that he had left more than ten years of preparation to the rebel army after their bitter failure of 2013-2014. How do you expect the government to respond to this challenge in the face of an army that took ten years of preparation? We only have to suffer the fallout, we only have to consolidate these gains with our nation languishing in the evil of the century. And then, the big problem, what I do not like is that you attribute all this evil to the poor Westerners who die in any dark affair that happens in Africa, they are always seen as the black hand behind all evil.

My friend talked about everything and nothing, I kept wondering if he got all these old stories from before he was born, but he never did politics, there were not enough radios in the village and newspapers were a bit expensive at the time that he could not get them every day. I tried to make him understand that political life has nothing to do with the state of a camper. Since he refused work, he would do better to wait calmly for offers from philanthropists and the government, besides it seems that he has already made friends with a girl from our village who always cooks him food. I knew the girl, she was expelled from several schools for prostitution and I wanted to know what he was looking for in such rubbish.

- I see this Aminata parading around your tent every time, sometimes with aromatic omelettes, sometimes chicken, sometimes with I-don't-know-what that she gets from I-don't-know-where. My brother, be careful, be aware of our state of orphans and displaced persons of war, we are not the ones who must tell sweet nothings or exaggeratedly bite the apple. We are rather the ones who must work hard to meet our challenges and that we become men in the days to come.

He seemed to be listening to me, and I expected a favorable response from him.

- Emile, you forget one thing: we are growing up and soon after we will grow old. We will not stay long in the camp, I know, despite the vulnerability of the central government to the rebels, we will return to

the village, we will find our fields, our livestock, our houses and why not our money that we hid under our mattresses, you must think differently brother, this camp is not ours.

- You have really lost your mind Lucien, we will not find anything in the village, not even a spoon. The rebels seize everything they find in the territory won, and for your information, your clothes now serve as civilian clothes and sometimes to dress up during the days of truce. If you listened to me I would advise you to go far from Aminata, she kills you little by little.

- I say it for the last time, I love her and no one can separate me from her. Don't talk to me about her past, I have one too, even worse than hers.

What more needs to be said? A lover, a lover of love, only listens to his heart. Despite our old friendship which was already becoming a familiarity, he could no longer listen to me although I saw his misfortune from afar given that this girl was a star in abortion and any man who went to town and returned with a fortune did not escape Aminata and they completely forgot their families. He was even accused of witchcraft and bad luck, he was a fearsome being in the village who made the beginner fetishists tremble. Before leaving I addressed my last words of discontent to Lucien: "My brother, I assure you in the name of our ancestors that as long as you frequent this charmer I will no longer come to greet you and you likewise, I do not want to share with you the same curses that your ugly beauty covers. "

"Too bad, go away, it's not you who feeds me" Lucien said.

The Door to Happiness in Disguise

Their platonic love grew, sometimes when I woke up in the morning I saw the girl coming out of Lucien's tent, sometimes when I came back from work I found them sitting in love. The camp was already tiring me, I had a small sum of money on me that could ensure me a modest life in the city. I no longer had the ambition to return to the village and the war seemed to last a long time. Sometimes a ceasefire, sometimes a truce, sometimes strong resumptions of fighting and so on, and even the camp was no longer really a city of refuge as we thought when we came, we waited for the bombs like at the front, they sometimes caused injuries in the camp, the rebels attacked us, the thieves were unfathomable or already some displaced people were demanding to return to their respective villages. I no longer had any interest in returning there, here in the city I find myself easily and there are more opportunities than in the village. I am no longer a docker, I now manage a hotel in the city. This is the hotel of Mama Fatu's husband, Papa Mweze, there I have an apartment to myself with a bedroom, a living room, a bathroom and toilet, a kitchen. I don't go to the camp frequently anymore, I only go there when I have had little things to give to the children there, they don't have clothes, shoes, even less slippers. The parents don't have the means to get them any. Besides, even the parents also have the same needs, they must then collect worn or dead shoes in shoe repair shops and make this their Sunday style, the children hurry their returns to their respective villages, at least there they went fishing in the river and came back with a few pennies after selling, the old people do nothing but smoke while telling each other their old memories, I swear to you that there is suffering. Dear city dwellers, find little to go and sympathize with these people, they have resisted all these years to what you cannot resist even for a minute, I left when the toilets were already clogged, they had nowhere to get rid of them, they

left the camp to go and do it in the grass because the neighbors of the camp refused to let these victims come into their toilets for fear that they would fill them up...

I thank the Eternal God for bringing me out of this mess, but one thing shocks me eternally, the absence of my mother. If she were here she would enjoy my fruits, I would have had to wipe away her tears by giving her everything she wanted at any time she preferred. At least her education never leaves my mind, her wisdom nourishes me, her advice guides me, and her guidance enlightens my steps, peace to her soul!

The last day I went to camp I had trouble recognizing Lucien, he was no longer like those of our age, he had aged, lost weight, he came towards me quickly like a child who came to greet his mother from the market knowing that there must be one or two sweets in the basket. When he was in front of me, he flowed a stream of tears, behind him was hiding an old woman that I did not know. The only sentence that came out of his mouth was: "if I had heard you". I had understood everything, I did not ask anything more but still I wanted to know who this old woman was in front of his tent, he bowed his head, raised it, bowed it then raised it and told me that it was Aminata. Oh really, we can't look at her twice, it's as if she had aborted a brood of monkeys, at that point, obviously only the one who loves her can see her beauty, even a blind man can't envy her because her ugliness stinks. She lay down on her mat, I noticed that her pregnancy was at term. Lucien then said to me with pity:

- Emile, please, my wife is going to give birth soon and I have no money with me, I am your childhood friend, come to my aid please. I will take everything you give me, even your most worn shoes I will wear them, even the dishcloths from your house I think my wife will be honored to wear them. My son will be born soon I do not know what I will feed him, nor what my wife will feed herself so as not to dry her breasts, I learned that you make a better life in the city, if you could even hire us in your villa, we will be up for it.

I cried, not because I felt sorry for him but rather because I was very moved to see him grow old along his youth just because he didn't listen to the advice of a single day and now he's ruining his whole life. I would

do better to help him, but I would do better not to help him since he will learn a life lesson from it. The tears that flowed from my eyes made him believe that I was touched, after drying my tears, I looked at him for the last time, I turned my back, I headed towards the city, I continued on my merry way. He was surprised, he stayed there yelling and all this was a useless disturbance to the other campers and to him personally. These kinds of punishments deserve these men who don't know how to listen, who make fun of everything to be interested in what doesn't suit them, who don't want to suffer in the present to enjoy in the future. I didn't hear from him anymore and I didn't want to hear from him anymore.

An effervescence filled the city, those who said they saw far were already searching for evil in Bukavu and some in Kinshasa. The situation was becoming more and more critical, it was there that I noticed that the country was going badly, the war was not stopping, on the contrary the far north is also affected by the hostilities, already the statistics reveal 7 million displaced persons from the war, a record, for those who died according to Non-Governmental Organizations since the beginning of 2023 the number is 2750 civilians dead in the war, and since 1997 this 30-year war has already caused 6 million deaths, it is a genocide orchestrated by our neighbors, I knew all this at the hotel where I worked when we hosted senior officials of the country who debated political affairs. The entire population is then revolutionized, and today they applaud the failed coup d'état that took place at the Palais de la Nation last month. The population mourns this man who according to them, could change the abnormal into normal, they treat as abnormal these useless expenses at the level of the presidency, the distractions to drag the country into war all these years despite the power of the army, the economic mediocrity with the exchange rate that gallops from one day to the next... The country faces several challenges that must be put an end not by means of democracy because it seems to fail, but the modernized tyrannical means may perhaps be able to remedy. They salute the bravery of certain countries in West Africa, notably Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, who are intelligently withdrawing from Panurge's sheep.

Personally, I have never been of the opinion for such remarks. At least I know that it is not the political actors who develop a country, it is the

population itself because development is endogenous. It must be wanted, designed, and issued by it although development is not imposed. It is difficult and even impossible to make a young Congolese believe that smoking, alcoholism destroy young people and harm professional perfection. They will rather give you a range of reasons that push them to do it, first unemployment that they take as a scapegoat, a posteriori the available jobs are low-paid, finally they will tell you that the State does not have clear policies assuming their support. This is why in Congo there is a proliferation of factories manufacturing wines and highly alcoholic products since the young population constitutes the enormous outlet, on the total population; 65% are young and more than half of Congolese youth are under 25, the illiteracy rate is high and stands at 27.1%, the unemployment rate is record low and is high at 84% and until then it is the offspring who will pay the price through hard work in order to pull the country out of chaos.

War, unemployment, underemployment, low school enrollment are not the only problems facing the Congolese state today, also the proliferation of churches here and there drags the population into poverty and puts a red band on their eyes so as to no longer see the future and get started on it, imagine the fortune that these churches make, they are called ASBL⁶ and are exempt from all tax obligations. This continuous proliferation is justified by the high rate of unemployment, this phenomenon can be explained in two camps; firstly, those who have felt the heat of poverty and want to pick up the call of the scam to strut around boasting that they are called by God. The second camp is made up of those unemployed people who, instead of managing to look for work, hang around in church and wait for the blessing of the master's hand, they never lack big bucks to offer every Sunday, in morning services, and it is they who rush to fill the offering basket at the same time as their children have nothing to put under their teeth at noon. On the other hand, I do not condemn this act of expressly wanting to fill the pastor's baskets, even less this legitimate defense of the unemployed who are intensifying under the roofs of churches, rather I preach the interdependence between the State and

⁶ Non-profit association; in the Democratic Republic of Congo governed by the constitution and law n° 004-2001 of July 20, 2001.

the church. Instead of the latter hosting unemployed people who can even be described as harmful elements to society, already our several ecclesiastical communities can maintain large farms and processing companies for the derivatives of their livestock. Imagine if only each of these communities set up a company and hired 500 or 700 unemployed faithful from its community still in each province of the country. This would have a repercussion on society with a double impact; first on the ecclesiastical community itself because it would collect large sums for tithes and thanksgiving, then for the faithful beneficiaries of the employment, apart from the pride of Christianity by experiencing the true love of neighbor long preached to them, they could also better manage their homes. But with this kind of movement, who would be incredulous?

It is foolish to say that the state is powerless when the church, the body of Christ, has never acted in terms of solving problems. I am not saying that the church must now play the role of the state, rather I am preaching loudly this interdependence that can change everything in the blink of an eye.

I strongly condemn the missionary detour that many of our pastors undergo and after all it is the population that becomes the victim. Imagine a good number of marriages are broken because of lying prophecies, engagements do not talk about it, it is enough for the pastor to have hairdressers from Saint Catherine under his roof to see behind the scenes the wealthy young men of the church by creating a false prophecy that their engagements do not emanate from divine love, that they must abandon them and that they see better in him to say that his daughters are those sent to them by God, the evil of the century.

Women must submit to their husbands and not to their pastors because it is nowhere written in the Bible that women will submit to pastors although they deserve a pinch of respect. The family is the unit of society, to solve certain problems in the country, its stability is necessary. We must fight against these kinds of practices that undermine family stability. Do not worry, the false envoys of God, these pastors who had received the call of fraud and not of God even seize married women and it is commonly said "the man of God feeds on his

sheep". I suggest, for this reason, to all Protestant or secular communities to create monasteries, convents where their pastors and nuns will live in order to spare our families from these seducers.

It is up to us to see a new way of looking at things by eradicating these mentalities from the public, things are not as complicated as we may think, rather it is proactive reasoning that we lack. The problem is not to be blamed on the regime in place because even in the most prodigious countries there is no shortage of difficulties for which they fight night and day, although it can be said that the United States constitutes the world power, as a country it faces several difficulties including income and wealth gaps, inequalities in access to education, over-representation of minorities in prison... As for the Democratic Republic of Congo the major problem is fragmented into tangible and intangible problems which are: the population is in food insecurity, the population has difficult access to quality basic infrastructure and social services, the communication routes are dilapidated and impracticable... But it is however reported that the lack of human security is a major obstacle to the development of the Democratic Republic of Congo, to remedy this the government is committed to implementing development programs to reduce poverty and to promote political integration and peace consolidation. But insecurity here is orchestrated by the proliferation of rebel groups in all corners of the country and this is due to major poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and underemployment. Think of a country where about 74.6% of the population lived on less than \$2.15 a day last year, and about one in six people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa lives in the Democratic Republic of Congo. There is no remedy for the poverty of a community without the implementation of prompt economic measures likely to alleviate the situation. Some say that to ensure the economic development of a country and to ensure its independence, coordination between fiscal policy and monetary policy must be improved, also the BCC⁷ must be capitalized to implement monetary policy by strengthening the banking system and improving its supervision.

⁷Central Bank of Congo created on February 23, 1961

The United Nations estimated the urbanization rate in Congo at 39.9% in 2010 for its total population estimated at 62 million, this rate was estimated at 42% in 2015 and should reach 60% in 2050. For this, since 2006 our different governments have thought in one way or another about the different development plans of the country, especially its infrastructure. In those years, all sectors of the country had to be put in order before improving them, this accelerated the 5 projects⁸ of the former president Joseph Kabila Kabange who really tried to rehabilitate certain regions of the country even if some observers believe that the rate of execution of these 5 projects was low and his results were mixed, nevertheless another opinion thinks rather that the results were relatively positive given that the execution of these projects was done on the government's own funds.

The efforts of the current government are already to be welcomed, particularly the PDL 145 territories⁹ with the BCECOc announced in mid-2023 to have

technically received more than 100 infrastructures across the 9 provinces under its charge. The Congolese State can find its breath of life in the eyes of the population if this time, it commits, not to stop the diversion because this seems impossible, rather to stop it and that these funds allocated for different projects bear fruit for us and our future generations. As for the population, not everyone will be at the head, nevertheless we can lend a hand to the government, we can develop

⁸The same president's development program in 2009 included a series of five projects: infrastructure, health and education, employment, water and electricity, housing.

^{HAS} President of the Democratic Republic of Congo from January 17, 2001 to January 25, 2019 and senator for life since March 15, 2019.

⁹Local Development Program of the 145 territories is a political initiative of His Excellency Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, aimed at fighting poverty, inequalities and promoting development in the 145 territories of the country.

^CCentral Coordination Office, one of the three delegated project managers within the framework of the development program for the 145 territories.

new techniques that will allow us to actively participate in the political and economic life of our country, the people are freeing themselves, they say.

And if the screams of bullets were silenced...

After a while, peace was still not there, the population was still suffering, moreover at that moment, we learned that other camps had been opened to welcome new displaced persons.

Every day we witness peaceful marches in all the cities of the East, some cry out for the departure of the leaders, some demand the increase and perpetuation of the efficiency of the national army. And I, as if to fill the void caused by the death of my mother, I was already engaged to a young lady who, totally or partially, fulfilled all my criteria. She is from my village and displaced by the war, she had not hung around the camp because her aunt welcomed her under her roof, it is Liz. Every evening she came back with her stories that she got from wherever the hotel provisions were found.

- This time, Emile, I have sad and good news to tell you, the whole city is talking about it. You know that the rebels have taken important and still strategic parts of the province, even the Rubaya has fallen...

- Yes, I replied, I heard it on the radio this morning, it hurts. Imagine that now our raw materials are being shipped to Rwanda, and the misfortune is that we are buying them at two or three times the price of yesteryear.

- In the town, everyone is stunned by this story that according to her a fisherman would be in his canoe with his son, a kid, wanted to cross the river to go to the other village, but the rebels were there, sixty of them, they begged the canoeist to make them cross the river for ten American dollars per rebel, oh that was already a lot, six hundred American dollars for such a small trip, he accepted.

Until then I was disgusted by her story and I no longer cared about its continuation, I would like it to stop there but she insisted:

- What astonishes everyone is that, when they were in the middle of the river, the boatman let the boat sink and as they knew how to swim he quickly escaped without returning to his son, as the neighbors do not

know how to swim very well, they all died and the boatman's child. What a sacrifice, it is said that the government called him for a reward.

I was surprised that there could still be true patriots in Congo, heroes despite everything that is happening in the country, despite the equipment that the rebels use to seduce the naive. Accepting to lose one's son to safeguard national unity is not only an act of patriotism but also a living sacrifice offered to God for the salvation of the country.

Liz expressed her regrets to me because everyone was contesting this way of sacrificing oneself for such a "dead" country, I don't know how long he died or where he was buried, and that on the other hand the way to prove one's patriotism or to sacrifice oneself is to organize peaceful marches, or even, if necessary, to support the attackers who will be ready to overthrow this regime which is leading the country to harm.

No one thinks better than to massively enlist in the army and fight for the country, no one thinks better than to develop non-violent movements that can preach peace and living together, no one thinks better than it would be good to do like the gentleman and say no to corruption to give up our territories to the rebels, of course because the current youth is corrupt, they think that the task of pacifying the country falls only to the government, or to the armed force. Even the words of our mouths can fight instead of cartridges, the acts of our behavior can accomplish an incredible diplomacy and establish a lasting peace.

We must instill new knowledge in our children's knowledge, we had always learned at school all the wars that have encumbered Europe since antiquity but never those (wars)¹⁰ which make us crawl today, and

¹⁰The Democratic Republic of Congo has successively experienced three major wars:

- a. The first war 1996 to 1997: also called the war of liberation at the end of which the former Zairian president Mobutu Sese Seko was driven from power by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Zaire (AFDL) supported by foreign states.

even less the mutinies which our country experienced a few years just after its independence like the mutiny of the ex-Thysville (Mbanza-Ngungu) from July 7 to 10, 1960. All the students are tiring themselves out to master the famous European kings, their exploits, the entire history of France even if it is a bible to swallow without them simply knowing the areas of the different cities of the country besides this is a hard piece to bite into, you have to try to ask one of them to name all the provinces of the country, they will grind the dust. So, I wonder if by what magic do we want to remain without external aggression or defend the national integrity of a country whose dimensions we ignore. We must stop dreaming, if today the country is swimming in the evil of the century we have a large share of irresponsibility and which will harm us in the days to come. If in neighboring countries we teach children that the limits of their country go as far as Walikale we will never be at peace tomorrow after the war with its children who have accumulated such a swindle, our children must be prepared for it. This proportionality between evil and the century must stop harming, the more the century advances the more evil increases, nevertheless if only the cries of bullets would stop a large part of the Congolese problems will be resolved. I have just done the best on my part; Albert Einstein said it for a long time: "The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything."

This text, first of all an observation of the evil that encumbers us, is a memorandum to whoever reads it, far from being an object or subject of

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- b. The second war 1998 to 2002: is an armed conflict which took place on the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo, with a formal end on June 30, 2003.
 - c. The Kivu War: Since 2004, the war in the provinces of North and South Kivu has already caused the internal displacement of nearly 7 million people, as revealed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in a report published in October 2023.

senseless revolts, rather a notebook of appeal to national conscience, to national unity, to patriotism, to integral, sustainable and harmonious development.