

Editorial

2010, 1960, 1885... These dates refer to a historical reality which is considered to be important in both Belgium and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Belgium's colonial past started in 1885. For the Congolese it presumably ended in 1960. 2010 seems to be the 'right' year to commemorate these events, but the occasion is a *source* of political controversy as both countries have yet to fully digest their common past. Moreover, Belgium still grapples with Leopold II's legacy of mismanagement and gross violations of human rights. Official-speak bypasses these issues which time and again have been documented. This year's 'celebrations' do not seem to offer the necessary forum for an open and fair discussion of 'what went wrong where and when'. At best, they are hinted at, or referred to, when it comes to deciding whether the current Belgian king should take part in the celebrations in RDC or not. Fifty years of independence have done little to increase political stability in RDC. The old colonial presence has been replaced by neo-colonialist dependency relationships, with 'new kids on the block' calling the tune. History will tell whether the recent incursion of Chinese 'investors' will help the country (and the continent for that matter) to move up the development ladder. The early evidence does not seem encouraging. As such RDC's celebration year is just an example of other celebrations that highlight former colonial history and the independence movement that rocked the African continent at the end of the 1950s. We can only hope it will help both Africa and the former colonial powers to reflect on their respective roles and positions. It should also help current African political leaders to reflect on their functioning and their responsibilities in (mis)shaping their countries.

Afrika focus offers a forum to scholars and other stakeholders who want to engage in this and other kinds of controversial debates. It has done so in the past, and it will continue to do so in future. May we invite your opinions and articles on such issues as human rights, conflict resolution, grass root movements, and other such issues and dynamics that seem to continue to move the African continent.

A vos plumes!

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