

A refreshingly original history of the lost countries of the 19th and 20th centuries, examined and illustrated with the countries' postage stamps.

Nowherelands

An Atlas of Vanished Countries

Bjorn Berge

Illustrated throughout

16.2 x 21.5cm

240pp

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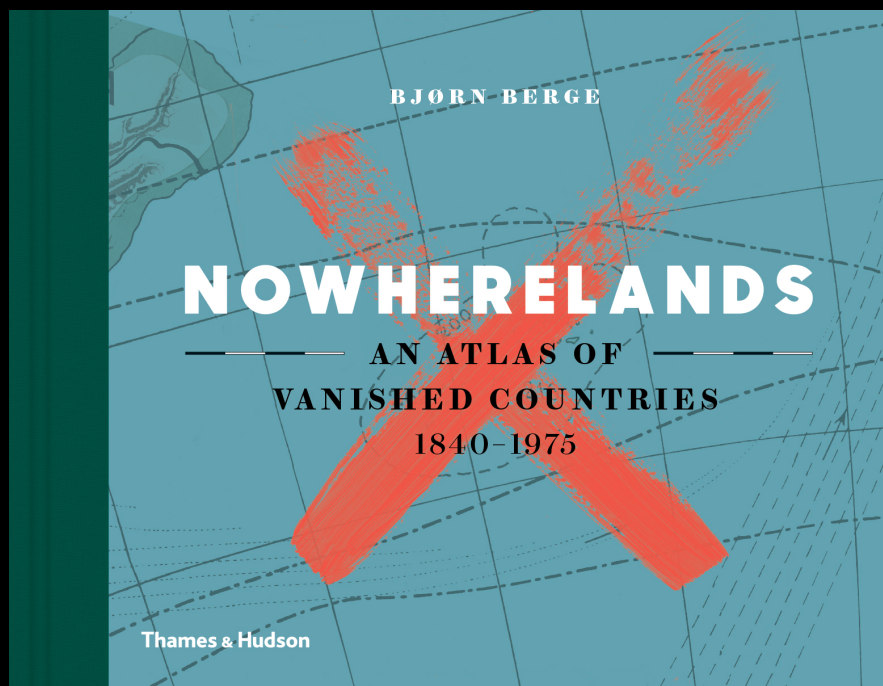
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Book



Key Sales Points

- An unorthodox history of 50 defunct nations from 1840 to 1975
- Drawing on fiction and eye-witness accounts as well as historical sources, Bjørn Berge's witty text casts an unconventional eye on these lesser-known nations, teasing out informative anecdotes and fascinating facts
- Each vanished country is pinpointed in detailed maps and stamps
- The range of countries reflect different aspects of world history during the 19th and 20th centuries, with its ideologies, imperialism, struggle for resources, immigration waves and major and trivial wars

1840

~ to ~

1860

SCHLESWIG

HELIGOLAND

THE TWO SICILIES

ELOBEY, ANNOBON
AND CORISCO

LABUAN

VAN DIEMEN'S LAND

PERIOD:	
1846-1906	
COUNTRY:	
LABUAN	
POPULATION:	AREA:
9,000	92 sq. km



Binge drinking in a seedy South Sea paradise

Some 8 km (5 miles) off the northwest coast of Borneo lies the island of Labuan. Apart from Bukit Kubong, a hill that creeps up to a modest height of 148 m (486 ft) in the north, Labuan is quite flat.

When the British were sniffing out the possibility of taking possession of this almost uninhabited island, it was overgrown with rainforest and practically impenetrable – unless one could find some route through the labyrinth of swamps. But it had good harbour conditions and its location in the South China Sea offered a good base from which to challenge the many pirates who were causing havoc in the area. And once coal deposits were found on the surface near Bukit Kubong, the British ceased to doubt.

Just before Christmas 1846, Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin II of Brunei signed a treaty granting the British dominion over Labuan and the adjoining small islands. Although the otherwise mighty sultan did not consider Labuan an especially great loss, we may assume he came under a certain amount of pressure. It is later claimed that British men-of-war threatened to bombard the sultan's palace if he refused to sign. The correct version is probably that this was an advance payment of 'protection money' – the same as in your average Mafia story.

PERIOD:	
1863-1903	
COUNTRY:	
BOYACA	
POPULATION:	AREA:
498,541	91,647 sq. km



Decadents at war

The poet Julio Flórez never collected stamps. His interests lay in quite different directions. In photographs taken shortly before the turn of the century, he exudes an almost narcissistic dignity: hair swept back in greasy, oil-black waves, the tips of his moustache like panther tails and eyebrows so arched they would have done Salvador Dali proud. All this arranged carefully around eyes that were slightly protuberant, as if subject to some pressure from within – the way you often see with poets. He has recently published a collection of erotic poems, to widespread moral outrage – which must have elevated him to a state of almost provocative ecstasy: against his father, against his mother, against the rest of his family.

Julio Flórez was born into the liberal aristocracy in the small town of Chiquinquirá in 1867. It was the administrative centre of the Estado Soberano Boyacá (the Sovereign State of Boyacá) in the coffee belt in the far north of the Andes. The town clings to the western face of the steep mountains of the Cordilla Oriental, which tower more than 5,000 m (16,500 ft) in the east before descending via the tropical high plateau, the Llanos, to the source of the Orinoco water system and the border with Venezuela in the north.

salons at restaurants near the Cathedral in Bogotá with names like The Greedy Cat and The Cradle of Venus. On warm evenings, they break into nearby graveyards:

Melancholy music from stringed instruments issues from the crypt. Birds ruffle their wings in the cypresses, fireflies swarm about and the moon lights up the marble gravestones. Confidences are shared with the graves! Serenades are delivered to the dead! Some rest their foreheads on the tree trunks and meditate.⁶⁰

At that time, Colombia was embroiled in the Thousand Days War, a liberal rebellion against a strict, conservative regime. It erupted after the conservatives were caught out in election fraud in 1899, and was intensified by an economic crisis that followed a fall in coffee prices. More than 100,000 were wounded or killed during the conflict, including a large group of child soldiers who were forcibly conscripted on the conservative side.

Little changed after a peace treaty was signed in 1902, under heavy pressure from the USA, which feared that the disturbances might delay the start of construction on the Panama Canal.

And in 1905, Julio Flórez was exiled for blasphemy. For reasons that are unclear, he returned to favour a couple of years later and was appointed secretary to the embassy in Spain, where he died in 1923, probably of cancer. Today he is largely unknown, but in Colombia, his poem 'Mis flores



1903: Coat of arms with an Andean condor and flag.

negras' ('My black flowers') still lives on: 'Listen: beneath the ruins of my passions / in the depths of this soul that you will no longer delight / amid the dust of dreams and illusions / my black flowers bloom benumbed'.⁶¹ The poem, the title of which is probably a paraphrase of the title of Baudelaire's poetry collection, *Les fleurs du mal* ('The flowers of evil'), has been set to music and performed by numerous Latin American tango musicians.⁶²

PERIOD:	
1891	
COUNTRY:	
TIERRA DEL FUEGO	
POPULATION:	AREA:
10,000	74,000 sq. km

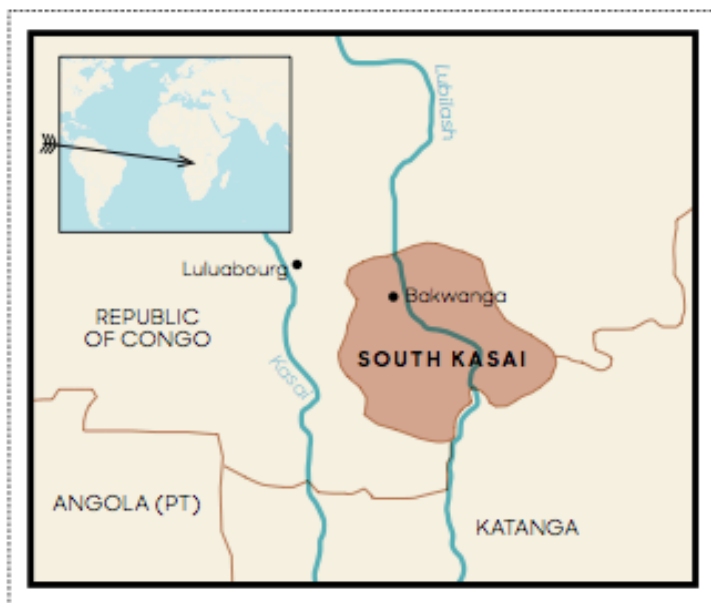


Dictator in gold

Right at the southern end of the South American continent lies the archipelago of Tierra del Fuego, Land of Fire. Actually, it was originally called Land of Smoke, after the Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan, who navigated the area in 1520 and noticed the locals lighting interconnected and unusually smoky bonfires along the shoreline. The expedition ship then travelled further west, into a labyrinth of bays, coves and fjords. Here, it first encountered a series of low, grassy islands, dense with forest. The further west it sailed, the hillier the terrain became, culminating in the high, sharp mountain chains interspersed with glaciers where the land met the Pacific Ocean. Magellan sent home reports of a short, cold and damp summer. To the south, where the Pacific and Atlantic finally meet beneath the cliffs of Cape Horn, the climate was sub-arctic; and over the centuries that followed, the violent storms there made the region notorious as one of the world's largest ship graveyards.

Although Tierra del Fuego was long deemed economically uninteresting, the situation quickly changed when gold was found in the area in the 1800s. This sparked a lengthy conflict between Chile and Argentina, both of which wanted dominion over the archipelago. Tierra del Fuego never

PERIOD:	
1960-1962	
COUNTRY:	
SOUTH KASAI	
POPULATION:	AREA:
1,000,000	30,000 sq. km



Miserable Balubas and precious minerals

When Belgium's King Baudouin drove an open-topped limousine from the airport to the ceremony that would formally dissolve the Congo as a Belgian colony, he had his elegant if useless ceremonial sword stolen. The thief seized it right out of his lap then leapt proudly over the car bonnet and ran away. The king was irritated and wanted to get the whole thing over and done with as quickly as possible. Even so, he couldn't resist the temptation of praising his uncle King Leopold II, who had ruled what was known as the Free State of Congo with legendary brutality in the 1800s. Patrice Lumumba, later president of the Congo, was enormously provoked and is said to have responded brusquely: 'We are no longer your monkeys.'²³²

In 1959, the Belgian Congo provided ten per cent of the world's copper, fifty per cent of its cobalt and seventy per cent of all its industrial diamonds. No wonder, then, that Belgium fought back when the Congolese elite united to demand national sovereignty with immediate effect in spring 1960. But since Belgium had signed a UN treaty some years before that clearly stated the principles of independence and self-determination, there was simply no way out of it.

Together with his fellow-missionaries, he was instrumental in having a planeload of Norwegian dried cod sent to the people of the Kasai region at Christmas in 1960.

The regime in South Kasai received some financial support from Belgian companies in return for mining concessions. More of this went on weapons than on food and medicine. Some of it also went on stamp issues, initially Belgian colonial stamps overprinted with *Etat Autonome du Sud Kasai* ('Autonomous State of South Kasai'). Later the country produced its own series bearing a snarling leopard head, which speaks for itself. The work was outsourced to the Swiss printers, Courvoisier, and at the last minute the motifs were supplemented with a V for Victory. This had proven to be an effective symbol for the Allies during the Second World War; perhaps it would work here too.

In the meantime the central government in the Congo, with President Lumumba at its head, decided to destroy the breakaway state of South Kasai once and for all. They asked the UN to help out. The organization was already on hand in the area with peacekeeping forces, but drew the line at the use of active firepower. Next, the Soviet Union was contacted, and proved more than willing to provide air transport for the Congolese government troops in autumn 1961.

During the battles that followed, 3,000 Balubas were killed and several hundred thousand put to flight. Kalonji was taken prisoner, but later managed to escape and re-establish a provisional administration. He eventually gave up in October 1962.



1961: Leopard head
with V sign.

Eric Packham, who worked from 1961 to 1962 as the UN's Chief Civilian Affairs Officer in Luluabourg on the border of South Kasai, later wrote about his experience of this time:

What I found fascinating in the Congo was the mix of the absurd and the deadly serious, the horrific

and the beautiful, the innocent and the evil, the mean and cowardly and the generous and noble, the terrifying and the hilarious. There was never a dull moment because one never quite knew what would happen next: the mood could change as quickly as the expression on the face of a baby.²⁸⁵

South Kasai returned to the Republic of Congo as one of the country's twenty-one provinces, but was later restructured and renamed East Kasai, after unrest in 1965. And thus it has continued in the whole Congo area, with profound internal differences that have never been resolved. Again and again, they have flared up into bloody clashes.

At the same time, slowly but surely, the country is being emptied of gold, diamonds and other valuable minerals. From the edges of the forests around the many remote air-strips, the local people observe quiet negotiations between strangers before small white planes are quickly emptied of packages containing clothes, medicine and money. They take off again for Dubai, Brussels, Hong Kong and London, heavily laden with less practical treasures.²⁸⁶

BOOKS

Eric Packham (1996)
Freedom and Anarchy

M. W. Hilton-Simpson (1912)
Land and the Peoples of the Kasai



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