

The Congo women wanted culture

WHEN chaos reigned in the Congo, with tribal loyalties in tatters and western civilization a remote ideal for the more ambitious Africans, a husband-and-wife team from South Africa found themselves in the thick of the confusion.

Mr. Bremer Hofmeyr and his wife, both active workers for Moral Re-armament, know Africa almost as well as their home city—Johannesburg. Recently they visited Basutoland, and Nigeria

and Kenya (where Mrs. Hofmeyr lived before her marriage), areas where they have worked. They have just made a visit to Cape Town.

'We lived in the Congo for more than a year at the time of its independence,' Mrs. Hofmeyr said in an interview yesterday.

'During that period our house was broken into five times — and my husband was arrested by three men one night. They held a knife at his throat and demanded money. . . .'

Mr. Hofmeyr did not have much money on him — fortunately. And then he was released.

THE GENERAL'S ARMY

With the reorganization of the country's structure, said Mrs. Hofmeyr, she and her husband worked among the people of General Mubutu's army.

'Men in the army suddenly found themselves important. Some rose overnight from the bottom to officer's rank. And they found that they needed Western culture—and know-how at European-type parties.

'Mostly, their wives had no Western training and would have been quite lost at a cocktail party. So the men tended to take the line of least resistance—and the most sophisticated women they could find in a hurry. Primitive wives were summarily dispatched back to the bush. Families were broken up and chaos reigned.'

A NEW IDEOLOGY

The M.R.A. people tried to provide something to fill the gap, and give these people a new ideology.

Wives who found themselves behind times in the new regime came along seeking enlightenment. And the workers had — often—to start at rock bottom.

They convinced many of the women that they had to make an effort to raise their own standards of material and moral life.

There was a great response.



Mrs. B. Hofmeyr