

## CWW4.8 Congo (1960-1962) (Page 1 of 8)

In the 1950s, Belgium found itself under increasing pressure from the United Nations, as well as both the United States and the Soviet Union, to grant the Congo its independence. Afraid that the situation in the Congo would turn violent in much the same way as Algeria, the Belgian government requested that the United Nations play a lead role in the Congo's transition to independence.

In June 1960, the Congo officially gained its independence. However, the paternalistic Belgian colonial state had been composed exclusively of European officials, ensuring that the new Congolese government was woefully unprepared. The first president of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, reached out to other African countries, as well the Soviet Union, for material aid.

For its part, the Soviet Union was supportive of Lumumba's government, publically drawing parallels between Congolese independence and the Soviet Union's own struggle against Western imperialism. Furthermore, the Soviet Union believed that the United Nations was not acting as a non-aligned peacekeeping force in the Congo, but rather interpreted its presence to be in support of the Western powers. (Source #1)

On the other hand, the United States believed the Soviet Union was actively undermining the United Nation's efforts to maintain law and order. It also believed that the West was "losing" the Congo to the Soviet Union, much as it had lost Cuba in the previous decade. (Source #2)

In November 1960, the United States backed a coup d'état by General Joseph Mobutu against Lumumba. The President was placed under house arrest and then executed, but not before smuggling one last message out to his countrymen. In it, he explained that his foremost goal had been Congolese independence from all political blocs. (Source #3)

In November 1960, the United States backed a *coup d'état* by General Joseph Mobutu against Lumumba. The President was placed under house arrest and then executed, but not before smuggling one last message out to his countrymen. In it, he explained that his foremost goal had been Congolese independence from all political blocs. (Source #4) For his part, General Mobutu proved to a loyal client of the United States, ensuring the West gained access to the Congo's immense mineral wealth. Despite Mobutu's repressive dictatorship, President Kennedy would say of the Congolese leader that, "Nobody in the world has done more than the General to maintain freedom against the Communists."

Text from Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge University Press: 2005), p. 136-143.

---

## CWW4.8 Congo (1960-1962) (Page 2 of 8)

### Primary Source #1: Independence day speech of Patrice Lumumba, 30 June 1960.

Men and women of the Congo,

Victorious independence fighters,

I salute you in the name of the Congolese Government. (...)

Although this independence of the Congo is being proclaimed today by agreement with Belgium, an amicable country, with which we are on equal terms, no Congolese will ever forget that independence was won in struggle, a persevering and inspired struggle carried on from day to day, a struggle, in which we were undaunted by privation or suffering and stinted neither strength nor blood...

That was our lot for the eighty years of colonial rule and our wounds are too fresh and much too painful to be forgotten.

We have experienced forced labour in exchange for pay that did not allow us to satisfy our hunger, to clothe ourselves, to have decent lodgings or to bring up our children as dearly loved ones...

We have seen our lands seized in the name of ostensibly just laws, which gave recognition only to the right of might.

We have not forgotten that the law was never the same for the white and the black, that it was lenient to the ones, and cruel and inhuman to the others....

Who will ever forget the shootings which killed so many of our brothers, or the cells into which were mercilessly thrown those who no longer wished to submit to the regime of injustice, oppression and exploitation used by the colonialists as a tool of their domination?

All that, my brothers, brought us untold suffering. (...)

Brothers, let us commence together a new struggle, a sublime struggle that will lead our country to peace, prosperity and greatness.

Together we shall establish social justice and ensure for every man a fair remuneration for his labour.

We shall show the world what the black man can do when working in liberty, and we shall make the Congo the pride of Africa.

We shall see to it that the lands of our native country truly benefit its children....

We shall eradicate all discrimination, whatever its origin, and we shall ensure for everyone a station in life befitting his human dignity and worthy of his labour and his loyalty to the country. . .

Long live independence and African unity!

## CWW4.8 Congo (1960-1962) (Page 3 of 8)

Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!

Patrice Lumumba. "Speech at the Ceremony of the Proclamation of the Congo's Independence." 30 June 1960, Patrice Lumumba, Lumumba Speaks: The Speeches and Writings of Patrice Lumumba, 1958-1961, trans. Helen R. Lane and ed. Jean Van Lierde. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1972).

### **Primary Source #2: Letter from Nikita Khrushchev, Premier of the Soviet Union to Patrice Lumumba, Prime Minister of the Congo, Aug. 5, 1960**

The Soviet people are convinced that the heroic freedom-loving Congolese people will overcome all the difficulties which appear in their path and turn their country into a strong and prosperous state.

I want to assure you, Mister Prime Minister, that the Soviet Union is ready to and is already giving the Republic of the Congo comprehensive aid and assistance. The difficulties of your struggle are clear to us and understood. We know that the imperialists are hatching all kinds of plots against your young country right now. They will not disdain any means to achieve their treacherous ends. In their arsenal of subversive activity they have not only sabotage and economic subversion, but the organization of all kinds of plots and terrorist acts, which requires special vigilance on the part of the people and government of the Congo. Your government can completely count on the friendly and unselfish aid of the government of the USSR.

The Soviet Union completely shares the position of the Congolese government, which demands the cessation of imperialist intervention and the immediate withdrawal of Belgian troops in accordance with the decisions of the Security Council. We unconditionally support the principle of the territorial integrity and political unity of the Republic of the Congo and condemn the criminal imperialistic plans for the secession of Katanga, an integral part of the Republic of the Congo. The Soviet Union has already said that it will not simply be an observer if the aggression unleashed by the imperialists against the Congo is not stopped.

In the name of the Soviet people and its government and also from myself personally I send you, Mister Prime Minister, the most genuine wishes for success in your noble work directed at safeguarding the national interests of the Congolese people.

Accessed from:

A CWIHP Document Reader compiled for the international conference "The Congo Crisis, 1960-1961," Washington D.C. 23-24 September 2004. [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Congo1960-61\\_2.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Congo1960-61_2.pdf) (p. 47-49)

## CWW4.8 Congo (1960-1962) (Page 4 of 8)

### Primary Source 3: U.S. State Department – Report on Soviet Influence in Post-Independence Congo, August 30, 1960

SECRET

-1-

Tuesday  
August 30, 1960

#### UNITED NATIONS

1. Communist Menace and Lumumba's Position Analyzed - Our Ambassador at Leopoldville likens the Communist pattern in the Congo to that in Cuba, believing the Soviets are well on the way to complete capture of Lumumba and his followers as they took Castro in Cuba. The Soviets, who went along with UN intervention because of strong African backing, have introduced disruptive and threatening resolutions at the UN in New York to induce the UN to walk softly in the Congo, and at the same time in Leopoldville they have been making a serious effort to win Lumumba and his country. Our Ambassador observes that we are not dealing with civilized peoples in the Congo nor with a responsible government in de facto control, since the principal control instrument has broken up into independent groups of armed, savage bandits. Pointing out that the Congo can be in for a blood bath of frightening proportions unless real order is restored, he states that the present UN strength would suffice only to keep order in the principal population centers, but not in the interior. Our Ambassador feels that Lumumba is quite capable of demanding that UN troops leave the Congo, and unless the UN's wraps are removed he would favor the acceptance of such an invitation, beginning with the removal of the Guineans, believing this might shock Lumumba into a recognition of what his and the Congo's prospects would be in the absence of the UN and cause him to do an about face. The UN would then be in a position to demand certain conditions without which the contemplated economic and social programs cannot be carried out. He concludes that a showdown with the UN is near, and he hopes the UN is ready for it.  
Leopoldville 545 8/29/C

Accessed from:

A CWIHP Document Reader compiled for the international conference "The Congo Crisis, 1960-1961," Washington D.C. 23-24 September 2004. [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Congo1960-61\\_1.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/Congo1960-61_1.pdf)

(p. 192)

## CWW4.8 Congo (1960-1962) (Page 5 of 8)

### Primary Source #4: Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba's Last Statement, 1960

"All peoples have had to fight for their freedom. . . .The former colonies of America were liberated in this way. I remind you here of the Declaration of Independence adopted by the Congress of the United States in 1766 [sic], which proclaimed the overthrow of the colonial regime, the united colonies' liberation from the British yoke, and their transformation into a free and independent state. The Congolese nationalists have thus merely followed in the footsteps of the French, Belgian, American, Russian, and other nationalists. We have chosen only one weapon for our struggle: nonviolence. The only weapon that would bring victory is dignity and honor. Our watchword during the liberation campaign was always the immediate and total independence of the Congo. . . .

The powers that are fighting us or fighting my government, under the false pretense that they are fighting communism, are in fact concealing their real intentions. These European powers favor only those African leaders who are tied to their apron strings and deceive their people. Certain of these powers conceive of their presence in the Congo or Africa only as a chance to exploit their rich resources to the maximum by conniving with certain corrupted leaders.

This policy of corruption whereby every incorruptible leader is called pro-communist and every leader who is a traitor to his country pro-Western must be fought.

We don't want to tag along with any bloc. . . ."

Kevin Hillstrom, *The Cold War* (Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2006), p. 183-185.

## CWW4.8 Congo (1960-1962) (Page 6 of 8)

With your partners, review the timeline of events in this Case Study. Discuss which event would provide “headline” news as well as give an opportunity for any newspapers to discuss an overview of events. Agree as a group which event from this timeline you will use as your newspaper topic.

	<p><b>1959:</b> Tribal ABAKO leader Joseph Kasavubu is arrested in Leopoldville, leading to riots. Patrice Lumumba (left), leader of the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC), is arrested by Belgian authorities in Stanleyville, leading to riots. <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/17/patrice-lumumba-50th-anniversary-assassination">http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/17/patrice-lumumba-50th-anniversary-assassination</a></p>
	<p><b>January 1960:</b> The Brussels Conference meets to decide on the pace of Congolese independence. Lumumba is released from prison to attend. Congolese delegates insist on independence by June, and Belgium agrees in order to avoid fighting similar to France and Algeria’s war. <a href="http://congoconference2011.wordpress.com/tag/congo-berlin-conference/">http://congoconference2011.wordpress.com/tag/congo-berlin-conference/</a></p>
	<p><b>May 1960:</b> Elections are held for Congo’s first elected government. The MNC wins a majority, and Patrice Lumumba is elected Prime Minister. Joseph Kasavubu, favored by the Belgians, is President. <a href="http://www.africamuseum.be/about-us/press/press_independance/?searchterm=Baudouin">http://www.africamuseum.be/about-us/press/press_independance/?searchterm=Baudouin</a></p>
	<p><b>June 30, 1960:</b> In ceremonies held to mark the independence of Congo, Belgium’s King Baudouin (left) speaks of Belgium’s role as a “civilizer” of the new African nation. Newly-elected Prime Minister Lumumba gives a scathing critique of Belgium’s role at the same event. Lumumba is cheered by the crowd. <a href="http://belgieroyalist.blogspot.com/2010/09/sm-king-baudouin-in-africa.html">http://belgieroyalist.blogspot.com/2010/09/sm-king-baudouin-in-africa.html</a></p>
	<p><b>August 1960:</b> Mineral-rich provinces Katanga and South Kasai secede from Congo in order to preserve economic ties to the Belgians. The US and Belgium privately back this secession. Lumumba seeks military aid from the Soviet Union to retake the province while the UN organizes forces to intervene. <a href="http://patachu.com/lumumba-patrice-1925-1961/">http://patachu.com/lumumba-patrice-1925-1961/</a></p>
	<p><b>September 1960:</b> Soviet-backed Lumumba is dismissed as PM by US-backed Kasavubu (left). Lumumba is placed under house arrest after he declares that Kasavubu has been deposed. Army General Joseph Mobutu leads a coup d’etat against both men. <a href="http://www.biography.com/people/groups/died-on-march-24/">http://www.biography.com/people/groups/died-on-march-24/</a></p>

## CWW4.8 Congo (1960-1962) (Page 7 of 8)

	<p><b>December 1960:</b> Lumumba is found by the Army and transferred to Katanga, where Belgian troops work with Mobutu's troops. The UN holds emergency meetings to demand the release of Lumumba. Non-aligned nations withdraw from the UN in protest. The US and USSR veto competing resolutions. <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/17/lumumba-50th-anniversary-african-leaders-assassinations">http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/17/lumumba-50th-anniversary-african-leaders-assassinations</a></p>
	<p><b>January 17, 1961:</b> Lumumba is executed by Congolese troops under the command of Belgian army officers. Kasavubu is backed by Mobutu as leader of the Congo while civil war continues against Katanga province. <a href="http://congoconference2011.wordpress.com/tag/congo-berlin-conference/">http://congoconference2011.wordpress.com/tag/congo-berlin-conference/</a></p>
	<p><b>September 10, 1961:</b> UN secretary-general Dag Hammarskjold authorizes a UN invasion of Katanga to end the war that gives the US and Belgium its excuse to intervene in Congolese politics. <b>On the 19<sup>th</sup></b>, his plane crashes after he visits the leader of Katanga on a peace mission, and he dies. <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/17/dag-hammarskjold-congo-troubled-history">http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/17/dag-hammarskjold-congo-troubled-history</a></p>
	<p><b>November 1965:</b> US- and Belgian-backed General Mobutu has another coup d'état. He renames the country Zaire, and renames himself as Mobutu Sese-Seko. He will rule Zaire until 1997 as an ally of the U.S. <a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mobutu_Nixon.gif">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mobutu_Nixon.gif</a></p>

## CWW4.8 Congo (1960-1962) (Page 8 of 8)

The event our newspaper will cover is \_\_\_\_\_.

Divide up the sources below. These websites, or any others you find, should appear in the bibliography section of the newspaper you will eventually create for this assignment (page 2, lower left corner). Each of you will read ONE of them to start.

Research Task #	Website Title/Description	URL
1	<b>The Guardian UK global development blog:</b> "Patrice Lumumba: the most important assassination of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century" discusses evidence from Ludo De Witte's book	<a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/17/patrice-lumumba-50th-anniversary-assassination">http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/jan/17/patrice-lumumba-50th-anniversary-assassination</a> ; follow link from story to find out more about Africa's deposed leaders.  <a href="http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/from-the-archive-blog/2011/aug/17/archive-dag-hammerskjold-crash-death-1961">http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/from-the-archive-blog/2011/aug/17/archive-dag-hammerskjold-crash-death-1961</a> has links and an overview of UN actions
2	<b>Internet Archive:</b> "Kasavubu Hailed (1961)" newsreel video	Watch the newsreel video at this link: <a href="http://archive.org/details/1961-03-20_Kasavubu_Hailed">http://archive.org/details/1961-03-20_Kasavubu_Hailed</a> Then search for "Congo" and watch other newsreels with heavy pro-US emphasis.
3	<b>History Channel:</b> "Adlai Stevenson on Crisis in the Congo" gives the US position on the Congo in 1961	<a href="http://www.history.com/speeches/stevenson-on-congolese-crisis#stevenson-on-congolese-crisis">http://www.history.com/speeches/stevenson-on-congolese-crisis#stevenson-on-congolese-crisis</a>  Listen to the US ambassador's speech at the UN and use it to search for more articles on this topic.
4	<b>Air Mobility Command Musuem:</b> Museum for past U.S. Air Force Missions	<a href="http://amcmuseum.org/history/airlifts/congo_airlift.php">http://amcmuseum.org/history/airlifts/congo_airlift.php</a>  and a related story at a link found here talks about US military operations in the Congo during the 1960s.
5	<b>Encyclopedia:</b> ask your school's librarian to help you locate (online or in print) two articles about Congo	Search for the following key words within the encyclopedias and school databases: Congo, independence, Mobutu Sese-Seko, Patrice Lumumba, Joseph Kasavubu