

Patrice Lumumba and the Congolese **Struggle for Independence**



"Tears, Fire, and Blood"

Patrice Lumumba and the Congolese Struggle for Independence



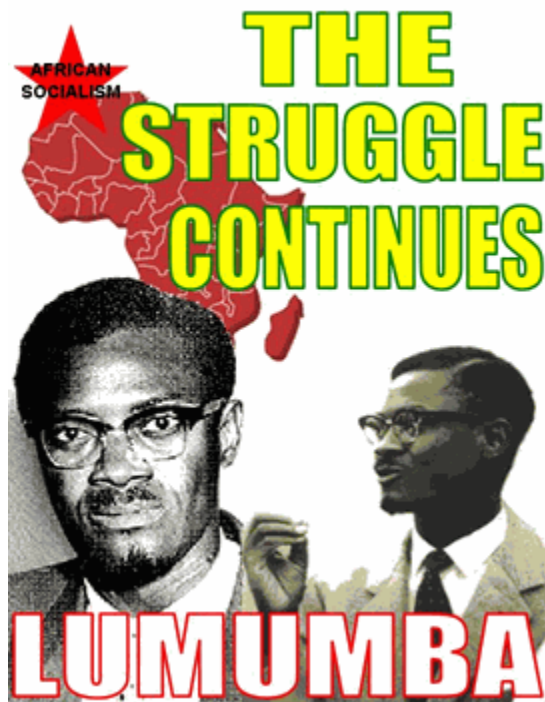
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Patrice Emery Lumumba Historical Biography



Patrice Emery Lumumba

b. July 2, 1925, Onalua, Belgian Congo [now Congo (Kinshasa)]

d. January 1961, Katanga province

African nationalist leader, the first prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (June-September 1960). Forced out of office during a political crisis, he was assassinated a short time later.

Lumumba was born in the village of Onalua in Kasai province, Belgian Congo. He was a member of the small Batetela tribe, a fact that was to become significant in his later political life. His two principal rivals, Moïse Tshombé, who led the breakaway of the Katanga province, and Joseph Kasavubu, who later became the nation's president, both came from large, powerful tribes from which they derived their major support, giving their political movements a regional character. In contrast, Lumumba's movement emphasized its all-Congolese nature.

After attending a Protestant mission school, Lumumba went to work in Kindu-Port-Empain, where he became active in the club of the évolués (educated Africans). He began to write essays and poems for Congolese journals. Lumumba next moved to Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) to become a postal clerk and went on to become an accountant in the post office in Stanleyville (now Kisangani). There he continued to contribute to the Congolese press.

In 1955 Lumumba became regional president of a purely Congolese trade union of government employees that was not affiliated, as were other unions, to either of the two Belgian trade-union federations (socialist and Roman Catholic). He also became active in the Belgian Liberal Party in the Congo. Although conservative in many ways, the party was not linked to either of the trade-union federations, which were hostile to it. In 1956 Lumumba was invited with others to make a study tour of Belgium under the auspices of the Minister of Colonies. On his return he was arrested on a charge of embezzlement from the post office. He was convicted and condemned one year later, after various reductions of sentence, to 12 months' imprisonment and a fine.

When Lumumba got out of prison, he grew even more active in politics. In October 1958 he founded the Congolese National Movement (Mouvement National Congolais; MNC), the first nationwide Congolese political party. In December he attended the first All-African People's Conference in Accra, Ghana, where he met nationalists from across the African continent and was made a member of the permanent organization set up by the conference. His outlook and terminology, inspired by pan-African goals, now took on the tenor of militant nationalism.

In 1959 the Belgian government announced a program intended to lead in five years to independence, starting with local elections in December 1959. The nationalists regarded this program as a scheme to install puppets before independence and announced a boycott of the elections. The Belgian authorities responded with repression. On October 30 there was a clash in Stanleyville that resulted in 30 deaths. Lumumba was imprisoned on a charge of inciting to riot.



The MNC decided to shift tactics, entered the elections, and won a sweeping victory in Stanleyville (90 percent of the votes). In January 1960 the Belgian government convened a Round Table Conference in Brussels of all Congolese parties to discuss political change, but the MNC refused to participate without Lumumba. Lumumba was thereupon released from prison and flown to Brussels. The conference agreed on a date for independence, June 30, with national elections in May. Although there was a multiplicity of parties, the MNC came out far ahead in the elections, and Lumumba emerged as the leading nationalist politician of the Congo. Maneuvers to prevent his assumption of authority failed, and he was asked to form the first government, which he succeeded in doing on June 23, 1960.

A few days after independence, some units of the army rebelled, largely because of objections to their Belgian commander. In the confusion, the mineral-rich province of Katanga proclaimed secession. Belgium sent in troops, ostensibly to protect Belgian nationals in the disorder. But the Belgian troops landed principally in Katanga, where they sustained the secessionist regime of Moïse Tshombe.

The Congo appealed to the United Nations to expel the Belgians and help them restore internal order. As prime minister, Lumumba did what little he could to redress the situation. His army was an uncertain instrument of power, his civilian administration untrained and untried; the United Nations forces (whose presence he had requested) were condescending and assertive, and the political alliances underlying his regime very shaky. The Belgian troops did not evacuate, and the Katanga secession continued.

Since the United Nations forces refused to help suppress the Katangese revolt, Lumumba appealed to the Soviet Union for planes to assist in transporting his troops to Katanga. He asked the independent African states to meet in Léopoldville in August to unite their efforts behind him. His moves alarmed many, particularly the Western powers and the supporters of President Kasavubu, who pursued a moderate course in the coalition government and favoured some local autonomy in the provinces.

On September 5 President Kasavubu dismissed Lumumba. The legalities of the move were immediately contested by Lumumba. There were thus two groups now claiming to be the legal central government. On September 14 power was seized by the Congolese army leader Colonel Joseph Mobutu (president of Zaire as Mobutu Sese Seko), who later reached a working agreement with Kasavubu. In October the General Assembly of the United Nations recognized the credentials of Kasavubu's government. The independent African states split sharply over the issue.

In November Lumumba sought to travel from Leopoldville, where the United Nations had provided him with provisory protection, to Stanleyville, where his supporters had control. With the active complicity of foreign intelligence sources, Joseph Mobutu sent his soldiers after Lumumba. He was caught after several days of pursuit and spent three months in prison, while his adversaries were trying in vain to consolidate their power. Finally, aware that an imprisoned Lumumba was more dangerous than a dead Prime Minister, he was delivered on January 17, 1961, to the Katanga secessionist regime, where he was executed the same night of his arrival, along with his comrades Mpolo and Okito. His death caused a national scandal throughout the world, and, retrospectively, Mobutu proclaimed him a "national hero."

The reasons that Lumumba provoked such intense emotion are not immediately evident. His viewpoint was not exceptional. He was for a unitary Congo and against division of the country along tribal or regional lines. Like many other African leaders, he supported pan-Africanism and the liberation of colonial territories. He proclaimed his regime one of "positive neutralism," which he defined as a return to African values and rejection of any imported ideology, including that of the Soviet Union.

Lumumba was, however, a man of strong character who intended to pursue his policies, regardless of the enemies he made within his country or abroad. The Congo, furthermore, was a key area in terms of the geopolitics of Africa, and because of its wealth, its size, and its contiguity to white-dominated southern Africa, Lumumba's opponents had reason to fear the consequences of a radical or radicalized Congo regime. Moreover, in the context of the Cold War, the Soviet Union's support for Lumumba appeared at the time as a threat to many in the West.

{Text, edited from Encyclopedia Britannica}

Lumumba's Last Letter

Written to His Wife Just Before His Death

Patrice Lumumba under arrest
in December 1960



My dear companion,
I write you these words without knowing if they will reach you, when they will reach you, or if I will still be living when you read them. All during the length of my fight for the independence of my country, I have never doubted for a single instant the final triumph of the sacred cause to which my companions and myself have consecrated our lives. But what we wish for our country, its right to an honorable life, to a spotless dignity, to an independence without restrictions, Belgian colonialism and its Western allies-who have found direct and indirect support, deliberate and not deliberate among certain high officials of the United Nations, this organization in which we placed all our confidence when we called for their assistance-have not wished it.

They have corrupted certain of our fellow countrymen, they have contributed to distorting the truth and our enemies, that they will rise up like a single person to say

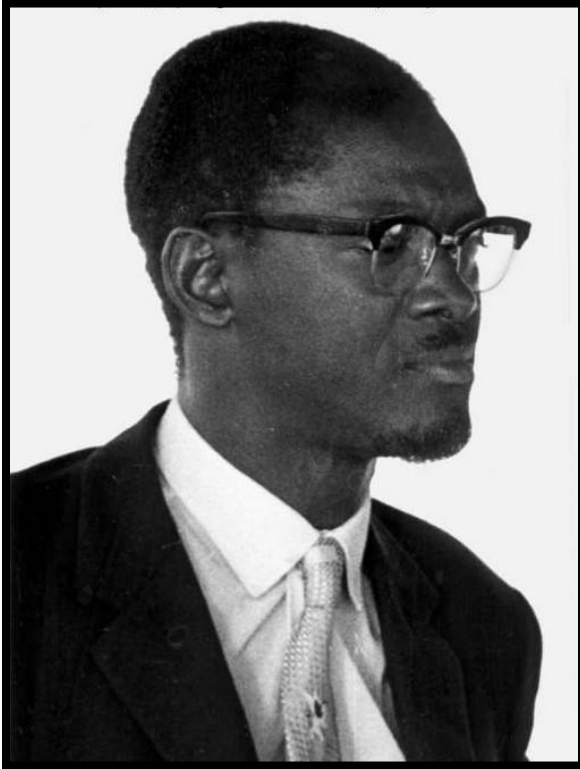
no to a degrading and shameful colonialism and to reassume their dignity under a pure sun.

We are not alone. Africa, Asia, and free and liberated people from every corner of the world will always be found at the side of the Congolese. They will not abandon the light until the day comes when there are no more colonizers and their mercenaries in our country. To my children whom I leave and whom perhaps I will see no more, I wish that they be told that the future of the Congo is beautiful and that it expects for each Congolese, to accomplish the sacred task of reconstruction of our independence and our sovereignty; for without dignity there is no liberty, without justice there is no dignity, and without independence there are no free men.

No brutality, mistreatment, or torture has ever forced me to ask for grace, for I prefer to die with my head high, my faith steadfast, and my confidence profound in the destiny of my country, rather than to live in submission and scorn of sacred principles. History will one day have its say, but it will not be the history that Brussels, Paris, Washington or the United Nations will teach, but that which they will teach in the countries emancipated from colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history, and it will be, to the north and to the south of the Sahara, a history of glory and dignity.

Do not weep for me, my dear companion. I know that my country, which suffers so much, will know how to defend its independence and its liberty. Long live the Congo! Long live Africa!
Patrice

Patrice Lumumba
The First Prime Minister of the Congo (Zaire)
On June 30, 1960, Independence Day



Men and women of the Congo,

Victorious fighters for independence, today victorious, I greet you in the name of the Congolese Government. All of you, my friends, who have fought tirelessly at our sides, I ask you to make this June 30, 1960, an illustrious date that you will keep indelibly engraved in your hearts, a date of significance of which you will teach to your children, so that they will make known to their sons and to their grandchildren the glorious history of our fight for liberty.

For this independence of the Congo, even as it is celebrated today with Belgium, a friendly country with whom we deal as equal to equal, no Congolese worthy of the name will ever be able to forget that it was by fighting that it has been won [applause], a day-to-day fight, an ardent and idealistic fight, a fight in which we were spared neither privation nor suffering, and for which we gave our strength and our blood.

We are proud of this struggle, of tears, of fire, and of blood, to the depths of our being, for it was a noble and just struggle, and indispensable to put an end to the humiliating slavery which was imposed upon us by force.

This was our fate for eighty years of a colonial regime; our wounds are too fresh and too painful still for us to drive them from our memory. We have known harassing work, exacted in exchange for salaries which did not permit us to eat enough to drive away hunger, or to clothe ourselves, or to house ourselves decently, or to raise our children as creatures dear to us.

We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon, and evening, because we are Negroes. Who will forget that to a black one said "tu", certainly not as to a friend, but because the more honorable "vous" was reserved for whites alone?

We have seen our lands seized in the name of allegedly legal laws which in fact recognized only that might is right.

We have seen that the law was not the same for a white and for a black, accommodating for the first, cruel and inhuman for the other.

We have witnessed atrocious sufferings of those condemned for their political opinions or religious beliefs; exiled in their own country, their fate truly worse than death itself.

We have seen that in the towns there were magnificent houses for the whites and crumbling shanties for the blacks, that a black was not admitted in the motion-picture houses, in the restaurants, in the stores of the Europeans; that a black traveled in the holds, at the feet of the whites in their luxury cabins.

Who will ever forget the massacres where so many of our brothers perished, the cells into which those who refused to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were thrown [applause]?

All that, my brothers, we have endured.

But we, whom the vote of your elected representatives have given the right to direct our dear country, we who have suffered in our body and in our heart from colonial oppression, we tell you very loud, all that is henceforth ended.

The Republic of the Congo has been proclaimed, and our country is now in the hands of its own children.

Together, my brothers, my sisters, we are going to begin a new struggle, a sublime struggle, which will lead our country to peace, prosperity, and greatness.

Together, we are going to establish social justice and make sure everyone has just remuneration for his labor [applause].

We are going to show the world what the black man can do when he works in freedom, and we are going to make of the Congo the center of the sun's radiance for all of Africa.

We are going to keep watch over the lands of our country so that they truly profit her children. We are going to restore ancient laws and make new ones which will be just and noble.

We are going to put an end to suppression of free thought and see to it that all our citizens enjoy to the full the fundamental liberties foreseen in the Declaration of the Rights of Man [applause].

We are going to do away with all discrimination of every variety and assure for each and all the position to which human dignity, work, and dedication entitles him.

We are going to rule not by the peace of guns and bayonets but by a peace of the heart and the will [applause].

And for all that, dear fellow countrymen, be sure that we will count not only on our enormous strength and immense riches but on the assistance of numerous foreign countries whose collaboration we will accept if it is offered freely and with no attempt to impose on us an alien culture of no matter what nature [applause].

In this domain, Belgium, at last accepting the flow of history, has not tried to oppose our independence and is ready to give us their aid and their friendship, and a treaty has just been signed between our two countries, equal and independent. On our side, while we stay vigilant, we shall respect our obligations, given freely.

Thus, in the interior and the exterior, the new Congo, our dear Republic that my government will create, will be a rich, free, and prosperous country. But so that we will reach this aim without delay, I ask all of you, legislators and citizens, to help me with all your strength.

I ask all of you to forget your tribal quarrels. They exhaust us. They risk making us despised abroad.

I ask the parliamentary minority to help my Government through a constructive opposition and to limit themselves strictly to legal and democratic channels.

I ask all of you not to shrink before any sacrifice in order to achieve the success of our huge undertaking.

In conclusion, I ask you unconditionally to respect the life and the property of your fellow citizens and of foreigners living in our country. If the conduct of these foreigners leaves something to be desired, our justice will be prompt in expelling them from the territory of the Republic; if, on the contrary, their conduct is good, they must be left in peace, for they also are working for our country's prosperity.

The Congo's independence marks a decisive step towards the liberation of the entire African continent *[applause]*.

Sire, Excellencies, Mesdames, Messieurs, my dear fellow countrymen, my brothers of race, my brothers of struggle-- this is what I wanted to tell you in the name of the Government on this magnificent day of our complete independence.

Our government, strong, national, popular, will be the health of our country.

I call on all Congolese citizens, men, women and children, to set themselves resolutely to the task of creating a prosperous national economy which will assure our economic independence.

Glory to the fighters for national liberation!

Long live independence and African unity!

Long live the independent and sovereign Congo!

[applause, long and loud]

Who Killed Lumumba?



Saturday, 21 October, 2000

On 17th January 1961 Patrice Lumumba, first and only elected Prime Minister of Congo, was murdered. The circumstances of his death remained a mystery, the identity of his killers unknown.

Now, forty years later, fresh scrutiny of documents held in government vaults and the testimony of those who were there at the time reveal a story of international intrigue and betrayal.

In 1956 Lumumba was a post office clerk; four years later he would be prime minister. In between he had been an "evolve" - one of Congo's tiny black middle class, a beer salesman and a prisoner, twice - once for embezzlement, though he claimed his motivation was political, and once for his political activities and inciting unrest.

Perhaps it was prison that radicalized him. By 1958 he had co-founded a political party, the National Congolese Movement, the MNC.

According to Jean Van Lierde, then a young Belgian radical who had befriended Lumumba, the MNC was distinctively pan-Africanist.

"Lumumba was the only Congolese leader who rose above ethnic difficulties and tribal preoccupations that killed all the other parties."

It was as leader of the MNC that Lumumba emerged as Congo's first prime minister after elections in June 1960.

At the Independence Day celebrations of June 30th Belgium's hostility to Lumumba deepened. Excluded from the official programme, Lumumba was advised by Van Lierde to get up and

make an impromptu speech. He did, passionately denouncing the harsh brutalities and indignities suffered by the Congolese under Belgian colonial rule. Diplomacy it was not.

"The king was very angry. The Belgians wanted nothing to do with him after that. People say it was this speech that brought his end," says Van Lierde.

The road to independence was rocky. Within days the army mutinied. Worse followed.

The mineral-rich Katanga province in the south declared independence. Its leader, Moïse Tshombe, a longtime enemy of Lumumba, was known close to the Belgian industrial companies which mined the copper, gold and uranium whose wealth had flowed back to Brussels for decades. Without Katanga Congo's was an impoverished economy.

The researcher and historian, Ludo de Witte, who has scrutinized documents held in the Brussels' archives for forty years, says the Belgian government was secretly protecting its interests and directing Katanga's secession from behind the scenes.

"The documents are very clear. All those officers and functionaries were following orders from the Belgian government, and following Belgian policy,"

Lumumba demanded that Belgian troops withdraw - they didn't. He expelled Belgian diplomats and called on the United Nations to defend the newly-independent state. He hinted that it might be necessary to ask the Soviet Union to assist unilaterally. That set alarm bells ringing in the West.

A mutinational UN peacekeeping force was deployed.

"It is on record in UN reports that Belgian civilian personnel made it impossible for the UN civilian experts to work properly", says Brigadier Indarjit Rikhye, the Secretary-General's military representative in Congo. Lumumba was frustrated. Finally he accepted a consignment of Soviet transport planes, military trucks and, it was suspected, guns. The American ambassador in Leopoldville began referring to the prime minister as "Lumumbavitch".

Sixty-seven days after he came to power, Patrice Lumumba was sacked by state president Joseph Kasavubu. Lumumba, in turn, tried to sack Kasavubu. It was stalemate.

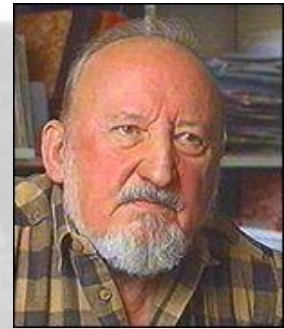
Lumumba was placed under informal house arrest at the prime minister's residence.

On October 6th, the Belgian Minister for African Affairs, Count d'Aspremont Lynden, sent a cable to Katanga's capital, Elizabethville, stating clearly that policy was now directed at the "definitive elimination" of Patrice Lumumba.

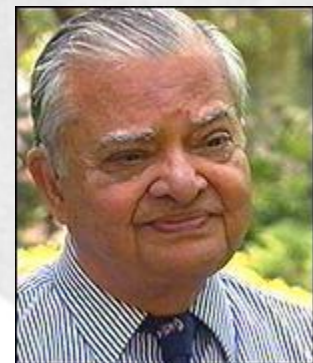
In London's Whitehall, analysts at the British Foreign Office were considering reports from the UK's ambassador in Leopoldville. One desk man, later to become head of the internal security service MI5, opined I see only two possible solutions to the problem. The first is the simple one of ensuring Lumumba's removal from the scene by killing him. This should, in fact, solve the problem."

Larry Devlin, the CIA station chief in Leopoldville received orders from Washington to await the arrival of "Joe from Paris".

"I recognised him as he walked towards my car, but when he told me what they wanted done I was totally, totally taken aback", says Devlin now. "Joe from Paris" was better known as the CIA's chief technical officer, Dr Sidney Gottlieb. He had brought with him a special tube of poisoned toothpaste. Devlin's job was to get the toothpaste into Lumumba's bathroom.



Jean Van Lierde, friend and advisor to Patrice Lumumba



Brigadier Indarjit Rikhye, knew of the conspiracy

"It would put the man away", recalls Devlin, who was aghast at the plan. "I had never suggested assassination, nor did I believe that it was advisable," he says now. The toothpaste never made it into Lumumba's bathroom. "I threw it in the Congo River when its usefulness had expired."

Devlin says he suspected, but didn't know for sure, that the order to assassinate Lumumba must have come from President Eisenhower himself. In August this year, however, Devlin's suspicion was confirmed officially by Washington - the order had come from the President.

Lumumba now made perhaps the worst decision of his life. He decided to escape. Smuggled out of his residence at night in a visiting diplomat's car he began a long journey towards Stanleyville. Mobutu's troops were in hot pursuit. Finally trapped on the banks of the impassable Sankuru River, he was captured by soldiers loyal to Colonel Mobutu.

He appealed to local UN troops to save him. The UN refused on direct orders from headquarters in New York. He was flown first to Leopoldville, where he appeared beaten and humiliated before journalists and diplomats.

"He was chained in the back of a truck. He was bleeding, his hair was disheveled, he'd lost his glasses", says Rikhye. "But we could not intervene."

Further humiliation followed at Mobutu's villa, where delighted young soldiers whooped with joy as they beat the elected prime minister in full view of television cameras. Lumumba was dispatched first to Thysville military barracks, one hundred miles from Leopoldville.

The Belgians demanded a more decisive ending - they wanted Lumumba delivered into the hands of his most sworn enemy, President Tschombe of Katanga. On January 15th 1961, the Belgian Minister for African Affairs wrote to his apparatchiks in Elizabethville instructing them to inform Tschombe that he must accept Lumumba without delay. It was in effect a death warrant. After a moment's hesitation Tschombe agreed.

Lumumba was beaten again on the flight to Elizabethville on January 17th. He was seized by Katangese soldiers commanded by Belgians and driven to Villa Brouwe. He was guarded and brutalized still further by both Belgian and Katangese troops while President Tschombe and his cabinet decided what to do with him.

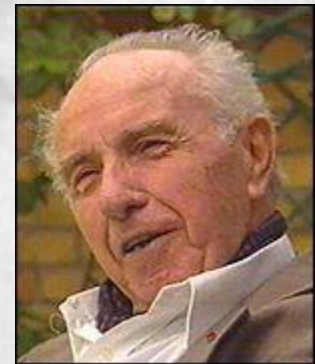
That same night it is said Lumumba was bundled into another convoy that headed into the bush. It drew up beside a large tree. Three firing squads had been assembled, commanded by a Belgian. Another Belgian had overall command of the execution site. Lumumba and two other comrades from the government were lined up against a large tree. President Tschombe and two other ministers were present for the executions, which took place one at a time.

The following day Katang's interior minister called a senior Belgian policeman to his office with orders to conceal the killings. "He said 'You destroy them, you make them disappear. How you do it doesn't interest me,'" says Gerard Soete. Soete and a companion exhumed the bodies from shallow graves, hacked them into pieces and dissolved them in acid from the Belgian-run mines nearby.

"We were there for two days," says Soete. "We did things an animal wouldn't do. That's why we were drunk. Stone drunk." When they ran out of acid, they made a fire for the last remains. When they had finished, there was no trace of human remains.

Nothing was said for three weeks - though rumour spread quickly. When Lumumba's death was formally announced on Katangese radio, it was accompanied by an elaborately implausible cover involving an escape and murder by enraged villagers. No-one believed it.

The research by Ludo de Witte and the recent testimony from witnesses and accessories have caused soul-searching in Brussels. The Belgian Parliament has opened a Commission of Inquiry into the events of forty years ago.



Gerard Soete, Commissioner of the Katangese Police, disposed of the evidence.

"It is time to address our history," says Geert Versnick, the MP who chairs the commission which has already begun taking evidence. "If there was wrong-doing in some of our former colonies, especially in the case of Mr Lumumba, then we should address our history."

The Commission's report is expected early next year.

Caroline Pare's Story

During the making of this film, producer Caroline Pare had her passport taken by soldiers and was held prisoner for three days before being thrown out of the country. Below is her own account of what happened.

Working in Kinshasa, capital of the Congo, is not your traditional journalistic experience. In the first place I was not being granted a visa. Despite my pleading urgency, I never did get one from the recently closed down Knightsbridge embassy. In the end I traveled via Kenya where I picked one up in a morning.

Luckily I had arranged for my driver-cum-fixer, Roger, to meet me and as soon as he arrived the whole nightmarish experience changed. He whisked me off to his broken down car and returned to the fray. He emerged fifteen minutes later having dropped US\$50. I thought it was a bargain! I won't dwell on the drive into town which ended in a smashed windscreen, my briefcase strap tying down the bonnet and a push start. But we eventually arrived at the hotel.

My first assignment was to get the precious foreign journalist accreditation. I was told the office I needed was on the 8th floor but I was to get out at the 10th as the lift could not stop at 8. The doors opened to pitch black. I stumbled around feeling my way along manky walls to the stairwell and eventually spotted light as I emerged on the 8th floor.

The place seemed deserted and reminded me of the film Barton Fink but when I knocked on door 825 I was called in. The window was shattered and the ministry official sat behind an empty desk in front of which, placed on the floor, were two car seats for visitors to sit in.

It was to be a long process to get the accreditation - three days in fact - but I eventually got the precious piece of paper and began work. I was making a documentary about the killing of the first Prime Minister of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, in 1961. Today Congo is in the throes of civil war but I assumed this 40 year old story would be straightforward to make. My first visit was to a man called Jonas Mukamba. He and some thugs were rumoured to have beaten Patrice Lumumba nearly to death on an aeroplane back in 1961 and I wondered if he wanted to talk about it.

The driver pulled up outside and took my business card to the gateman. At that very moment the car doors were flung opened and soldiers pushed in beside me, AK47s and all. We were forced to drive into the compound and the large gates slammed behind us.

Passport, mobile phones and car keys were taken. Nothing was said. We waited. Myself, my taxi driver (poor man) and my fixer. Two or three hours later our interrogators came. Who they were we never knew. Mine was charming, spoke immaculate French and wore spotless civilian clothes. He asked an odd list of questions about my family then as he left he reassuringly advised us to be a little patient as we would have to wait a few minutes more.

He was being economical with the truth. We were kept at Mukamba's house for the next three days. We were never told why we were there or if or when we were going to be released.

I ranted and raved at the soldiers as our first day turned into night. But when, at around midnight, there were sounds of someone being beaten up by the soldiers in the compound and Mukamba's daughter came rushing into the house crying I bit my tongue. I only pleaded for our guards to get us some food as none of us had eaten, or drunk, all day. They eventually agreed but having no vehicle themselves they decided that Pierre, the taxi driver could drive them to the Grand Hotel and buy some for us.

I scratched the number of the British Consul on a piece of paper and whispered to Pierre that if he could he should pass it to the hotel staff. He turned out to be a hero and despite having two soldiers guarding him managed to pass the note.

The days dragged by. There was nothing to do. I spent my time talking to Camille, my Congolese fixer, about today's war, independent Congo's short and turbulent history and the failings of the international community.

Our story ends happily. We were released in the middle of the night in a bizarre ceremony involving a lot of besuited men in a gloomy foreign Ministry room.

We were handed over from Military Intelligence to the Interior Ministry, to the Foreign Office and finally to the British consul on the understanding that she put me on the first plane out of there the next morning.

It was only after my release that I discovered that Jonas Mukamba had been arrested the day before our arrival on suspicion of plotting a coup d'etat. Plotting with the rebels supported by Uganda.

I was very sorry to leave Kinshasa. It may be a mad kind of place but it is also the most interesting. It's the American Wild West in the twenty first century.

Reporter: David Akerman

Producer: Caroline Pare

Series Producer: Farah Durrani

Editor: Fiona Murch

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New Data on Murder of Lumumba

Summary Contents:



This posting contains an article written by Stephen Weissman for the Sunday Washington Post of July 21, 2002 revealing new data from classified documents on the U.S. role in the murder of Patrice Lumumba in 1961. It also contains a link and brief excerpts from the extensive Belgian parliamentary report which led to an official Belgian apology, in February



this year, for Belgian complicity in Lumumba's death. The Belgian parliamentary report was prompted by a book first published in 1999, "The Assassination of Lumumba," by journalist Ludo de Witte. The book concentrated on Belgian complicity, and gave the impression of exonerating the U.S. of direct involvement. In the introduction to the English translation of the book, however, de Witte stressed the joint responsibility of the U.S. as well.

Weissman's article, referring to new evidence, calls for U.S. honesty about the past as well as U.S. action to make reparation for the damage caused by its earlier actions in the Congo.



Another posting sent out today has updates on the latest developments in the current Congo peace process.

In a related development, World Bank President James Wolfensohn, visiting Kinshasa in mid-July, announced that the World Bank was considering cancelling more than 80 per cent of the debt owed by the country to the World Bank. The cancellation should take effect in early 2003, he told reporters.



Opening the Secret Files on Lumumba's Murder

By Stephen R. Weissman
Washington Post, July 21, 2002

Reposted by permission of the author. Dr. Weissman was staff director of the U.S. House of Representatives subcommittee on Africa from 1986 to 1991. He has done extensive research on U.S. policy in the Congo as well as other African countries.

In his latest film, "Minority Report," director Steven Spielberg portrays a policy of "preemptive action" gone wild in the year 2054. But we don't have to peer into the future to see what harm faulty intelligence and the loss of our moral compass can do. U.S. policies during the Cold War furnish many tragic examples. One was U.S. complicity in the overthrow and murder of Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba.

Forty-one years ago, Lumumba, the only leader ever democratically elected in Congo, was delivered to his enemies, tortured and summarily executed. Since then, his country has been looted by the U.S.-supported regime of Mobutu Sese Seko and wracked by regional and civil war.

The conventional explanation of Lumumba's death has been that he was murdered by Congolese rivals after earlier U.S. attempts to kill him, including a plot to inject toxins into his food or toothpaste, failed. In 1975, the U.S. Senate's "Church Committee" probed CIA assassination plots and concluded there was "no evidence of CIA involvement in bringing about the death of Lumumba."

Not so. I have obtained classified U.S. government documents, including a chronology of covert actions approved by a National Security Council (NSC) subgroup, that reveal U.S. involvement in -- and significant responsibility for -- the death of Lumumba, who was mistakenly seen by the Eisenhower administration as an African Fidel Castro. The documents show that the key Congolese leaders who brought about Lumumba's downfall were players in "Project Wizard," a CIA covert action program. Hundreds of thousands of dollars and military equipment were channeled to these officials, who informed their CIA paymasters three days in advance of their plan to send Lumumba into the clutches of his worst enemies. Other new details: The U.S. authorized payments to then-President Joseph Kasavubu four days before he ousted Lumumba, furnished Army strongman Mobutu with money and arms to fight pro-Lumumba forces, helped select and finance an anti-Lumumba government, and barely three weeks after his death authorized new funds for the people who arranged Lumumba's murder.

Moreover, these documents show that the plans and payments were approved by the highest levels of the Eisenhower administration, either the NSC or its "Special Group," consisting of the national security adviser, CIA director, undersecretary of state for political affairs, and deputy defense secretary.

These facts are four decades old, but are worth unearthing for two reasons. First, Congo (known for years as Zaire) is still struggling to establish democracy and stability. By facing up to its past role in undermining Congo's fledgling democracy, the United States might yet contribute to Congo's future. Second, the U.S. performance in Congo is relevant to our struggle against terrorism. It shows what can happen when, in the quest for national security, we abandon the democratic principles and rule of law we are fighting to defend.

In February, Belgium, the former colonial power in Congo, issued a thousand-page report that acknowledged "an irrefutable portion of responsibility in the events that led to the death of Lumumba." Unlike Belgium, the United States has admitted no such moral responsibility. Over the years, scholars (including myself) and journalists have written that American policy played a major role in the ouster and assassination of Lumumba. But the full story remained hidden in U.S. documents, which, like those I have examined, are still classified despite the end of the Cold War, the end of the Mobutu regime and Belgium's confession.

Here's what they tell us that, until now, we didn't know, or didn't know for certain:

* In August 1960, the CIA established Project Wizard. Congo had been independent only a month, and Lumumba, a passionate nationalist, had become prime minister, with a plurality of seats in the parliament. But U.S. presidential candidate John F. Kennedy was vowing to meet

"the communist challenge" and Eisenhower's NSC was worried that Lumumba would tilt toward the Soviets.

The U.S. documents show that over the next few months, the CIA worked with and made payments to eight top Congolese -- including President Kasavubu, Mobutu (then army chief of staff), Foreign Minister Justin Bomboko, top finance aide Albert Ndele, Senate President Joseph Ileo and labor leader Cyrille Adoula -- who all played roles in Lumumba's downfall.

The CIA joined Belgium in a plan, detailed in the Belgian report, for Ileo and Adoula to engineer a no-confidence vote in Lumumba's government, which would be followed by union-led demonstrations, the resignations of cabinet ministers (organized by Ndele) and Kasavubu's dismissal of Lumumba.

* On Sept. 1, the NSC's Special Group authorized CIA payments to Kasavubu, the U.S. documents say. On Sept. 5, Kasavubu fired Lumumba in a decree of dubious legality. However, Kasavubu and his new prime minister, Ileo, proved lethargic over the following week as Lumumba rallied supporters. So Mobutu seized power on Sept. 14. He kept Kasavubu as president and established a temporary "College of Commissioners" to replace the disbanded government.

* The CIA financed the College and influenced the selection of commissioners. The College was dominated by two Project Wizard participants: Bomboko, its president, and Ndele, its vice-president. Another CIA ally, Lumumba party dissident Victor Nendaka, was appointed chief of the security police.

* On Oct. 27, the NSC Special Group approved \$250,000 for the CIA to win parliamentary support for a Mobutu government. However, when legislators balked at approving any prime minister other than Lumumba, the parliament remained closed. The CIA money went to Mobutu personally and the commissioners.

* On Nov. 20, the Special Group authorized the CIA to provide arms, ammunition, sabotage materials and training to Mobutu's military in the event it had to resist pro-Lumumba forces.

The full extent of what one U.S. document calls the "intimate" relationship between the CIA and Congolese leaders was absent from the Church Committee report. The only covert action (apart from the assassination plots) the committee discussed was the August 1960 effort to promote labor opposition and a no-confidence vote in the Senate.

How did Lumumba die?

After being ousted Sept. 5, Lumumba rallied support in parliament and the international community. When Mobutu took over, U.N. troops protected Lumumba, but soon confined him to his residence. Lumumba escaped on Nov. 27. Days later he was captured by Mobutu's troops, beaten and arrested.

What happened next is clearer thanks to the Belgian report and the classified U.S. documents. As early as Christmas Eve 1960, College of Commissioners' president Bomboko offered to hand Lumumba over to two secessionist leaders who had vowed to kill him. One declined and nothing happened until mid-January 1961, when the central government's political and military position

deteriorated and troops guarding Lumumba (then jailed on a military base near the capital) mutinied. CIA and other Western officials feared a Lumumba comeback.

On Jan. 14, the commissioners asked Kasavubu to move Lumumba to a "surer place." There was "no doubt," the Belgian inquiry concluded, that Mobutu agreed. Kasavubu told security chief Nendaka to transfer Lumumba to one of the secessionist strongholds. On Jan. 17, Nendaka sent Lumumba to the Katanga region. That night, Lumumba and two colleagues were tortured and executed in the presence of members of the Katangan government. No official announcement was made for four weeks.

What did the U.S. government tell its Congolese clients during the last three days of Lumumba's life? The Church Committee reported that a Congolese "government leader" advised the CIA's Congo station chief, Larry Devlin, on Jan. 14 that Lumumba was to be sent to "the home territory" of his "sworn enemy." Yet, according to the Church Committee and declassified documents, neither the CIA nor the U.S. embassy tried to save the former prime minister.

The CIA may not have exercised robotic control over its covert political action agents, but the failure of Devlin or the U.S. embassy to question the plans for Lumumba could only be seen by the Congolese as consent. After all, secret CIA programs had enabled this group to achieve political power, and the CIA had worked from August through November 1960 to assassinate or abduct Lumumba.

Here, the classified U.S. chronology provides an important postscript. On Feb. 11, 1961, with U.S. reports from Congo strongly indicating Lumumba was dead, the Special Group authorized \$500,000 for political action, troop payments and military equipment, largely to the people who had arranged Lumumba's murder.

Devlin has sought to distance himself from Lumumba's death. While the CIA was in close contact with the Congolese officials involved, Devlin told the Church Committee that those officials "were not acting under CIA instructions if and when they did this." In a recent phone conversation with Devlin, I posed the issue of U.S. responsibility for Lumumba's death. He acknowledged that, "It was important to [these] cooperating leaders what the U.S. government thought." But he said he did "not recall" receiving advance word of Lumumba's transfer. Devlin added that even if he had objected, "That would not have stopped them from doing it."

By evading its share of moral responsibility for Lumumba's fate, the United States blurs African and American history and sidesteps the need to make reparation for yesterday's misdeeds through today's policy. In 1997, after the Mobutu regime fell, the Congolese democratic opposition pleaded in vain for American and international support. Since then, as many as 3 million lives have been lost as a result of civil and regional war. The United States has not supported a strong U.N. peacekeeping force or fostered a democratic transition. The collapse in late April 2002 of negotiations between Congolese factions threatens to reignite the smoldering conflict or ratify the partition of the country.

Our government's actions four decades ago in Congo also have special meaning after the tragedy of Sept. 11. They warn that even as we justly defend our land and our people against terrorists, we must avoid the excessive fear and zeal that lead to destructive intervention betraying our most fundamental principles.

Parliamentary Committee of enquiry in charge of determining the exact circumstances of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba and the possible involvement of Belgian politicians

[brief excerpts from conclusions]

The full 1,000 page report of the committee is available in French and Flemish at:
<http://www.lachambre.be/commissions/LMB/indexF.html> and
<http://www.lachambre.be/commissions/LMB/indexN.html>

Links to a [summary](#), [introduction](#), and [conclusions](#) in English, can be found here.

THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE ENQUIRY COMMITTEE

December 2001

I. THE FIGHT AGAINST LUMUMBA

1. Political Elimination

Lumumba was and remains a striking yet controversial personality. He was called a Satan by some, and honoured as a true people's hero by others. The latter mythologized Lumumba after his death. Indeed, it is a fact that he was the first democratically elected Prime Minister of the Congo. ...

Between 10 and 14 July, following the beginning of the Belgian military intervention and the interruption of diplomatic relations, there was a spiral of mutual accusations, leading to a complete split. During that period, the Belgian government - convinced of the fact that it no longer had to consider the Lumumba government - attempted to influence the creation of a new Congolese government. ... In order to finance the policy against the Lumumba government, the Belgian government appealed to so-called secret funds, only some of which were approved by Parliament. ...

The Belgian action is only one element in a wider group of opposition forces. Crucial to the final fall of Lumumba was the split between the Congolese Prime Minister and the UN Secretary General Hammarskjöld, because it forced Lumumba on the one hand to (openly) ask for the support of the Soviet Union and on the other hand encouraged the United States (behind the scenes) to organise active opposition against Lumumba (with the first plans of physical elimination). ...

The activities of the Commission have been aimed at detecting possible Belgian responsibilities in the murder of Patrice Lumumba. But it is clear that a Belgian, or even an American action had little or no chance of success without the existence of internal opposition within the Congo itself. ... different factors, domestic as well as foreign, can be shown to have contributed to the deposition of Prime Minister Lumumba on 5 September 1960. After 5 September, there was a period of great confusion. ...

During this period, the Belgian government was especially concerned about the actions of Lumumba. After having given its support to the deposition of Prime Minister Lumumba, it was eager to prevent him from returning to power and this was a real possibility. ... When, finally, Mobutu took action to arrest Lumumba on 10 October, which he had always refused to do until that time, it was in exchange for a Belgian promise to provide technical and military support to the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC). The Belgian government was opposed to all possible forms of reconciliation, direct or indirect, between the Congolese leaders. The expression "elimination définitive" by Minister d'Aspremont Lynden on 6 October 1960 - in a telex to the ambassador Rothschild in Elisabethstad - should be seen from this perspective.

Conclusion:

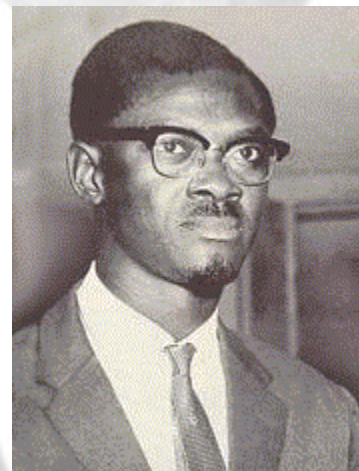
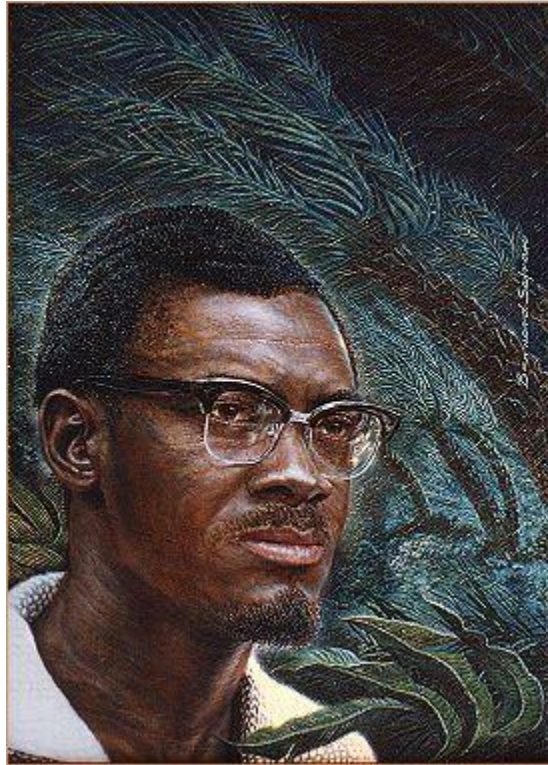
With regard to the exact circumstances of the murder of Patrice Lumumba: after a thorough analysis, it is highly probable that Lumumba was executed in the jungle on 17 January 1961 between 9.40 pm and 9.43 pm, within 5 hours after his arrival in Katanga (for a more detailed description, the commission refers to the experts' report). Regarding the possible involvement of Belgian politicians: The transfer of Lumumba to Katanga was organised by the Congolese authorities in Leopoldstad, supported by Belgian government authorities, especially the Ministers of Foreign and African Affairs and their colleagues.

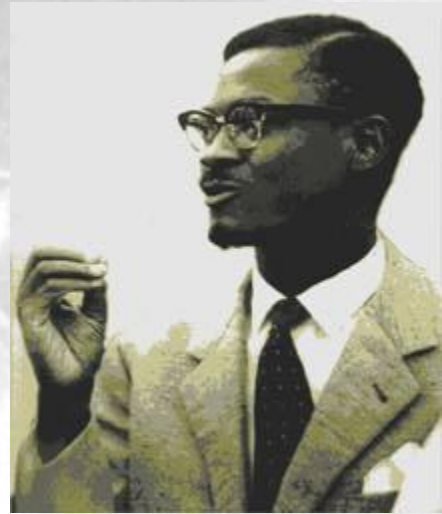
Belgian advisors in Leopoldstad collaborated with the organisation of the transfer. No single document, of which the commission is aware, indicates that the Belgian government or a member thereof gave the order to physically eliminate Lumumba. The investigation does not show that the Belgian authorities premeditated the murder of Lumumba when it attempted to transfer him to Katanga. It is very clear, though, that the physical safety of Lumumba was of no concern to the Belgian government. It deemed the safety of Lumumba less important than other interests. By not considering the possible risks of the transfer, not asking guarantees for his physical safety or insisting on humane treatment and a trial, the Belgian government and especially the Minister of African Affairs showed a lack of forethought and a lack of respect for the constitutional state.

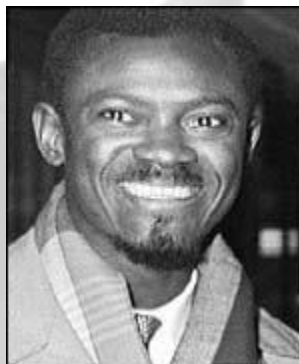
After hearing about the events of 17 January, the government, or at least certain members of it, acted irresponsibly by opting to spread lies to the public and all its allies. This attitude inevitably raised doubts about the role of the Belgian authorities. Considering the preceding, the current norms regarding public morality and, without considering the personal and moral considerations of that time, the commission concludes that certain members of the Belgian government and other Belgian participants were morally responsible for the circumstances leading to the death of Lumumba.

Patrice Lumumba Photo Gallery

http://www.africawithin.com/lumumba/patrice_lumumba.htm







CLICK TO EXPAND



Sources:

- [Speeches and writings by and about Patrice Lumumba](#) at [Marxists.org](#)
- [Virtual Memorial to Patrice Lumumba](#) at Find-A-grave
- [SpyCast](#) - 1 December 2007: On Assignment to Congo-Peter chats with Larry Devlin, the CIA's legendary station chief in Congo during the 1960s. Larry reflects on his reasons for joining the CIA, the political situation in Congo at the time, and the face-off with the Soviets in the Third World. He also discusses his response to the controversial directive from headquarters to have Congo's Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba killed.
- [Africa Within](#) A rich source of information on Lumumba, including a reprint of Stephen R. Weissman's 21 July 2002 article from the *Washington Post*, "Opening the Secret Files on Lumumba's Murder," detailing declassified documents on the CIA's role in Lumumba's murder and the overthrow by Mobutu.
- [BBC](#) Lumumba apology: Congo's mixed feelings
- [Mysteries of History](#) Lumumba assassination
- [Lumumba and the Congo](#) Documentary of Lumumba's life and work in the Congo
- [BBC](#) An "On this day" text. It features an audio clip of a BBC correspondent on Lumumba's death.
- [Belgian Parliament](#) The findings of the Belgian Commission of 2001 investigating Belgian involvement in the death of Lumumba. Documents at the bottom of the page are in English.
- [Belgian Commission's Conclusion](#) A particular document from the previous link
- [D'Lynn Waldron](#) Dr. D'Lynn Waldron's extensive archive of articles, photographs, and documents from her days as a foreign press correspondent in Lumumba's 1960 Congo
- [Mysteries of History](#) Lumumba assassination
- [CIA plans included the assassination of Patrice Lumumba](#), report from the Washington Post by Karen DeYoung and Walter Pincus
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