

## Historical Security Council

**Topic :The Katanga Crisis in the Congo [1961]**

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### INTRODUCTION

The Congo Crisis is a current political disruption which began in the days following Belgium's granting independence to the Congolese on June 30th, 1960. It is a fight between the de facto Republic of the Congo's government (which was supported by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics [USSR] till Patrice Lumumba<sup>1</sup>'s death) and the rebels (aided mainly by the United States of America {until Patrice Lumumba's death} and the Western European Bloc)<sup>2</sup>.

After the declaration of independence for the Republic of the Congo, Belgium entered into negotiations for mining rights in the African nation. On another note apart from these mining negotiations, on July 5th, 1960, the Congolese National Army at Thysville demanded higher wages, greater autonomy and the removal of European officers. The rebellion spread throughout the country, resulting in numerous violent attacks.

With the purpose of protecting the Belgian citizens in the Congo and restoring peace, the Kingdom of Belgium sent armed members to the Republic of the Congo. However, this was done without the permission of the Congolese mandataries, who at that time were Joseph Kasavubu (president) and Patrice Lumumba. In response to this, Congo's government asked the United Nations (UN) for help in removing the Belgian servicemen (Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, n.d.). One week after the rebellion began, on July 14th, the UN accepted the request and created the Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC). This peacekeeping force would "guarantee the retirement of the Belgian military

<sup>1</sup> Former Prime Minister of the Republic of the Congo

<sup>2</sup> The US stopped giving aid to the rebels and started giving support to The Congo in 1961.

from the Republic of The Congo, help the Government to keep public political stability and lend it technical assistance (Las Naciones Unidas, 2003)".

Patrice Lumumba asked the ONUC's help for ending the Katangese secession, which the Organisations des Nations Unies au Congo denied. Because of this, he asked intercession to the Soviet Union, which finally accepted it. The USSR provided Lumumba planes for transporting his soldiers into Katanga. Lumumba also asked free African countries to help him with this cause. These actions alarmed Western regimes and President Kasavubu, which desired giving provinces partial autonomy.

On September 5th, 1960, Joseph Kasavubu fired Patrice Lumumba from his position, while the prime minister also proclaimed the dismissal of the president. After days of confusion of who was the legitimate leader of the country, Joseph Mobutu got to Congo's leadership by a coup d'etat on September 14th. He was supported by Kasavubu and by the Congolese who wanted a pro-Western nation.

The United Nations granted Lumumba protection in Leopoldville because of the risk it meant for him to be under Mobutu's regime. However, he fled to Stanleyville, where his followers had the leaderships of the region. In this city, he was again granted help from the USSR, which sent armed forces for fighting against the rebel region Katanga. However, he was arrested on December 2nd by Kasavubu's forces. On the 17th of January, 1961, he was given to the Katangan administration, along with two of his supporters. In this place, he was a victim of assassination which has not been investigated in detail yet. (Cordel AND Wallerstein, 2016).

The assassinations have led to the worsening of the situation in the Congo, where conditions impede peace and order. The crisis transcends the national level, for it risks the international peace and security [which will be discussed in the Current Relevance section] (Security Council, 1961).

Two days before the ONUC was created, Congo's Katanga region auto proclaimed independence. The movement was lead by Moïse Kapenda Tshombe. He had been president of the Conakat (Confederation of Tribal Associations of Katanga) party. This group had previously advocated for an independent Congo built by semi-autonomous provinces when Belgium held a conference on how would the Republic of the Congo be

governed [The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, 2018]

Afterwards, after Kasavubu entered office, he stated Katanga's secession was necessary due to the fact that the new Congolese [Leopoldville] administration would exploit the region's abundance in minerals such as copper, gold and uranium. [South African History Online, 2017].

Belgium intended to keep involvement in the mining rights (especially the ones of Katanga), as explained before. Therefore, this nation supported Katanga's secession movement. Other supporters included the U.S. and the United Nations itself. The American vice-president Richard Nixon believed Tshombe was "a pro-West advocate and staunch anti-Communist Christian [South African History Online, 2013]".

However, after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba (former Congo's Prime Minister) in Katanga, besides Maurice Mpolo (Minister of Youth) and Joseph Okito (former vice-president of the Senate) [BBC, 2008], the United States of America [USA] and the United Nations have stopped supporting the secession. [South African History Online, 2017]. Now, Tshombe's administration is in the sights of the responsibility for the crime. In spite of this, the secession movement is still actively being supported by the Kingdom of Belgium. As well, disturbances throughout the Congolese nation continue to keep off the longed for peace.

According to Oxford's Dictionary of the Social Sciences, secession is "The voluntary withdrawal of a state or province from a larger state structure, such as a federation or empire" [Calhoun, 2002].

In simpler words, it is the separation of one territory from another.

The situation has been a problem since Belgium entered the Republic of the Congo claiming the intention of protecting its citizens, it has committed the crime of territorial invasion.

The Congo Crisis has become a 'proxy war'. According to The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations (4 ed.), "Proxy wars are conflicts in which a third party intervenes indirectly in a pre-existing war in order to influence the strategic outcome in favour of its preferred faction."

Because of these numerous fights over leadership, the population of the Congolese territory is being affected, while the number of casualties keeps rising.

- Republic of the Congo:

The recently independent nation has experienced an astonishing amount of riots and violence along its territory. It has been granted by the United Nations a peacekeeping mission to expulse Belgian military. Soviet servicemen entered the country when asked by former Prime Minister Lumumba, which were expelled from the country eventually. Nowadays, Congo (Leopoldville) is led by President Joseph Kasavubu and Joseph Mobutu, after this last one came to the leadership thanks to a coup d'etat against Lumumba.

The mandataries of the country at the moment (pro-Western) are dubious for Lumumba's death, who was allied with the Soviet Union.

- United States of America:

In a first instance, this country was in favor of the Katanganese secession. However, after Patrice Lumumba's assassination, it advocates for a complete Congolese nation. However, the sovereign state led by President Dwight D. Eisenhower is suspicious for conspiring against the ex prime minister's life.

The United States of America supports Joseph Mobutu's administration, for he desires to make the Republic of the Congo a pro-Western territory.

- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics:

This territory has actively supported Lumumba's government and forces by conceding him Soviet transportation and servicemen to fight against Katanganese secession. It is important to note that the USSR's second interference was against the UN-recognized government of Joseph Kasavubu, which might be considered as a foreign invasion.

- Kingdom of Belgium:

Its militia has intervned in the Republic of Congo since the early days of this country. First, they did it affirming it was with the purpose of protecting Belgian citizens. Afterwards, Belgium had intervned in

Katanga to help the region secede from the Republic of the Congo. This is due to the economic benefits Katanga can grant to the Kingdom of Belgium if the separation succeeds.

This country is suspect for Patrice Lumumba's assassination, for his actions were completely against the Katangan secession, which complicated the kingdom's interests come true.

- State of Katanga (unrecognized by the United Nations):

On July 11, 1960, the region of Katanga auto proclaimed its independence while being led by Moïse Tshombe. It has been fighting for its complete recognition among countries by fighting along Belgium against the Republic of the Congo.

Patrice Lumumba was killed in this territory, which makes Tshombe's administration be suspicious for the crime.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

At the second half of the 19th century, the Belgian King Leopold II set up his mind to appropriate the lands surrounding the Congo River. He reached his by signing treaties with more than 400 African independent territories through the Association Internationale du Congo [International Association of the Congo].

This conjunction of lands was called the Congo Free State, which was privately owned by the king. However, it was annexed to the official Belgian nation in 1908. During this period of time, the Kongo peoples [the natives of this territory] suffered various types of abuse, repression and attacks towards themselves as individuals and towards their personal properties. [Cordell, D.D., Lemarchand, R. ET AL, 2018]

1. 1908 - Belgium colonized the Congo after deciding it in a parliament.
2. 1914 to 1918 - The colony was an important source of uranium, which was given to the United States [during World War I].
3. 1922 - Contract saying that Africans should work between 4 and 7 years in mines and plantations. Due to this contract created by a law new railroads, roads, public buildings and electric station were

created under forced labour.

4. 1923 - Revolts that started in 1919 were controlled until this year.
5. 1950 - Political parties were prohibited, so people started making clubs as Abako and Bakongo.
6. 1955 - Belgium started to consider the independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo between 1980 and 2000.
7. 1958 - The creation of the first political party named The Congo National Movement by Patrice Lumumba.
8. January 1959 - Revolts in Leopoldville after a manifestation in Congo to ask for their independence.
9. January 4, 1959 - French Revolutions and other revolts make their independence come earlier. In addition, in Brussels a committee established that June 30, 1960 would be the independence day leaving Joseph Kasavubu as president and Patrice Lumumba as prime minister.
10. July 5, 1960 - After the independence many European officials stayed in Katanga, until national forces rebelled against them and their interests. There were many murders and abuses.
11. July 11, 1960 - Moïse Tshombé declared Katanga as an independent state, with Élisabethville as the capital and him as president. Also, he declares himself as an enemy of Lumumba. He had the leadership of a region rich in minerals and he said that the people who lived there, were different to the rest of the people who lived in the Congo.
12. July 1960 - ONU asked the withdrawal of all the Belgian forces from Katanga.
13. June 30, 1960 - Congo achieved their independence.
14. August 8, 1960 - Kasai, located in the north of Katanga, declared itself independent from the Congo too. It was not as big as Katanga. However, it was a very important region due to its minerals.

## **CURRENT RELEVANCE [DURING 1961]**

As mentioned in the introduction, this crisis has turned into a proxy war. Foreign countries are intervening in an unrecommended way in this armed conflict. While many European forces are working in favor of the Katanganese secession movement, the United States of America is giving its support to the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

If this situation persists, European, African countries and the United States of America will not be able to maintain positive diplomatic relationships.

The neighboring countries have been affected in a variety of ways by the war. However, the general economic failure of countries such as the Central African Republic or Zambia cannot be attributed to the war, for these countries had demonstrated an incapacity for economic development even before the war.

During January and May from this year, meetings have occurred in Leopoldville [Congo] and Tananarive [Madagascar] with the purpose of solving the constitutional crisis that followed Lumumba's retirement of the government by President Kasavubu. However, the Tananarive conference was taken off by Antoine Gizenga, supporter of the previous Prime Minister.

This conference suggested a loose confederation of states and was opposed by the central government in Leopoldville. At a third conference was held in Coquilhatville, capital of the Equateur province, the leaders agreed to form a federal state of Congolese provinces. Tshombe who wanted more independence for Katanga opposed this.

In April Tshombe was arrested for criticizing President Kasa-Vubu. He was later released in June after swearing to reunite Katanga with the Congo. It was the second day of August when Cyrille Adoula was elected Prime minister by the parliament. This has led to certain solidarity to the central government.

By the end of August, Moïse Tshombe had not followed the SC's resolution of retiring foreign mercenaries. It was at the morning of August 28 when Operation Rum

Punch took place, capturing eighty-one mercenaries from other countries. However, this operation was taken before the official United Nations' acceptance.

This is why Conor Cruise O'Brien, which represented Dag Hammarskjöld in Katanga, agreed with foreign consuls that they would retire mercenaries by themselves, which did not actually happen. (Boulden, 2001)

- Restoration of Parliament

Being Kasavubu the president of the Republic of the Congo and Cyrille Adoula the prime minister, the parliament restoration occurred on July 22, 1961. A new federal government system was imposed on August 2, 1961.

The approval for this action was totally consistent by the members of the chambers and parliament. The United Nations, willing to stay away from participating directly in political discussions, solely limited itself to make negotiations and parliament restorations easier (Boulden, 2001).

- Operation Morthor

On September 13, 1961, the ONUC Indian officials launched the Operation Morthor, in order to stop Katanga-supporter mercenaries. However, this mission was put into force without the acceptance of the Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjöld. The servicemen desired, besides quitting the hirelings, to finally finish the Katanganese secession movement. (Boulden, 2001).

However, this operation did not bring nothing more than greater bloodbaths and social instability. In August a new prime minister (Cyrille Adoula) was elected mending the split between East and West. Nevertheless, the government was not in control over the Orientale and Kivu provinces.

The Crisis has caused the death of 100,000 people. It led to the assassination of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, as well as a traumatic setback to the United Nations following the death of UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in a plane crash as he sought to mediate.

100,000 Belgians that lived in or near the capital Leopoldville.

The Security Council sent 10,000 troops. 5,000 were United Nations troops.

- Political Impact

The Republic of the Congo has been divided into several groups which have been struggling for more than a year. Because of the various rebel attacks, the administration of Joseph Kasavubu and Cyrille Adoula has not been able to establish peace within the country.

The divisions and tension have not been found only in the inside of the territory. Countries such as the United States, the USSR, Belgium and the UK have been supporting several factions of the armed conflict, restraining the possibilities for peace in the mentioned African nation.

- Economic and social impact inside the Congo and countries involved.

The years of conflict resulted in millions of people abandoning their homes, sometimes to live for years in forests where many perished and the collapse of what infrastructure still remained after decades of neglectful rule.

Economic life dominated mainly by peasant agricultural production, with only fleeting and second hand contacts with the industrial centers of the world.

Belgium and the United Kingdom have obtained numerous economic revenues by helping secessionist Katanga, by the mining activities of the UMHK.

The Congo has browbeaten fellow countries by their decision of choosing a style of government. Although Kasavubu's administration has been aided by the US [capitalist], we ought to remember the USSR has helped Lumumba and his desires to finish the Katangese secession movement.

However, the dismissed Prime Minister denied his allegiance to communism by stating: "We are neither Communists, Catholics nor socialists. We are African nationalists. We reserve the right to choose our friends in accordance with the principle of positive neutrality [Khokhlov, 1961]."

## INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS

- London and Washington DC policymakers were confronted with a conflict of decolonization with emerging Cold War tensions, yet also the acknowledge that the UN was very susceptible to African and Asian influence.
- As previously mentioned, the USSR actively helped the movements of Patrice Lumumba, previous prime minister of the Republic of the Congo. However, its second interventions in the African nations occurred during the UN-recognized government of Kasavubu could be seen as invasive, for they did not have the official recognition of the administration.
- ONUC has been led mainly by troops from neutral countries, such as Ireland and Sweden. This is due in order to prevent possible incrementations of the ongoing Cold War, with the US and the USSR primarily fighting against each other. In the case of Ireland, its involvement in the Congo Crisis has the first time the nation has fought in another country since its creation in 1922.
- As well, ONUC has relied on contributions from non-aligned, anti-colonial African and Asian states, like Ghana and India. This meant that as the crisis continues, African and Asian representatives start formulating and executing the UN policy and have had a close relationship with the Secretary General.
- According to the United Kingdom, Congo posed a threat to their near colonies in Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Tanzania and Uganda. As Belgium, this nation put its attention into the European influenced networks, especially that of the Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK).
- Sponsored by the umbrella organization Tanganyika Concessions, this union has led to economic revenues for the UK. The discord of this nation has been whether to ally with the United States and fight in favor of the UN-recognized administration of Kasavubu, or to continue helping Katanga in order to keep obtaining fiscal advantages (O'Malley, 2017).

## UN ACTIONS

· After the Belgian invasion of the Republic of the Congo the United Nations decided to create a special organization called Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo, "ONUC". These forces would have the responsibility to ensure the exit of the Belgian servicemen from Congolese territory.

· Following the coup d'état made by Joseph Mobutu, the life of Patrice Lumumba was in danger. This is why the United Nations gave him special asylum in Leopoldville, the capital city of Congo. However, the individual fled to Stanleyville in order to fight Katanga by his own (accompanied by the USSR and some partidaries).

· In a first instance, the United Nations had provided its acceptance to the secessionist movement of Katanga. However, after the assassination of Patrice Lumumba, the organization stopped its support towards the movement for Katanganese non-official leaders were now suspects of the assassination of the previous prime minister of the Republic of the Congo.

· Months later, as part of the efforts made by the ONUC to maintain peace in the belligerent territory, Irish servicemen were sent to the city of Jadotville<sup>3</sup> (inside the Katanganese region), which has been crucial in the mining economic activities.

· The so-called "A" Company was, nevertheless, brutally attacked by the pro-secessionist forces for six days. They were ultimately forced to surrender on September 17, 1961, failing in their attempt to serenize the conflict. (Byrne, 2016).

· Forced by the American and British managements to find a solution to the problem, the secretary general (Dag Hammarskjöld) travelled to Congo. On September 16, he agreed to meet Moïse Tshombe in the city of Ndola to negotiate a cease-fire.

<sup>3</sup>Irish and Swedish companies had been previously sent to Katanga to accompany the ONUC. However, they were removed from the territory without any public explanation.

· On September 17, prior to the arrival on Ndola, the aircraft where the secretary general was traveling crashed, killing him. In spite of the difficulties to a cease-fire agreement that this could mean, this was signed on September 20 by Tshombe and Mahmood Kiary [leader of ONUC civilian operations]. [Boulden, 2001].

## **POINTS TO DISCUSS**

1. Quick discussion on the Katangan-secession-movement approval
2. The intervention of the UN and external countries.
  - a) The Blue Helmets and the Siege of Jadotville
  - b) Recognition of the Irish forces for their participation in the Siege of Jadotville
3. The reintegration of Katanga to the Congo.
4. Defining what actions should the Secretary General take in order to combat this problem.
5. Safety of citizens and displaced people
6. Actions to prevent further conflicts in the zone.

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