Battleground AFRICA

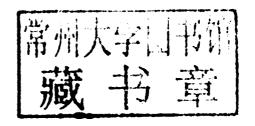
COLD WAR IN THE CONGO 1960-1965



LISE NAMIKAS

Battleground Africa Cold War in the Congo, 1960–1965

Lise Namikas



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At the Woodrow Wilson Center, the project is part of the History and Public Policy Program, directed by Christian F. Ostermann. Previous directors include David Wolff (1997–98) and James G. Hershberg (1991–97). The project is overseen by an advisory committee chaired by William Taubman, Amherst College, and includes Michael Beschloss; James H. Billington, Librarian of Congress; Warren I. Cohen, University of Maryland Baltimore County; John Lewis Gaddis, Yale University; James G. Hershberg, George Washington University; Samuel F. Wells Jr., Woodrow Wilson Center; and Sharon Wolchik, George Washington University.

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Place Name Changes

Former name Albertville

Bakwanga

Baudouinville

Coguilhatville

Elizabethville

Jadotville Katanga Province

Leopoldville

Luluabourg Paulis

Port Francqui

Stanleyville

Thysville

Changed to

Kalemie

Mbuji-Mayi

Moba

Mbandaka

Lubumbashi

Lukasi

Shaba

Kinshasa

Kananga Isiro

Ilebo

Kisangani

Mbanza-Ngungu

Frequently Used Abbreviations

Abako Alliance des Bakongo

ANC Armée Nationale Congolaise (formerly Force Publique)

CC CPSU Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet

Union

Cerea Centre de Regroupment Africain
CIA U.S. Central Intelligence Agency
CNL Conseil National de Libération

Conakat Confédération d'Associations Tribales du Katanga CRISP Centre de Recherche et d'Information Socio-Politiques,

Brussels

FRUS Foreign Relations of the United States (U.S. State

Department publications)

KGB Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopastnosti (Committee

for State Security), Soviet Union

MNC Mouvement National Congolaise

NSC National Security Council
OAU Organization of African Unity

ONUC Opération des Nations Unies au Congo (United Nations

Operation in the Congo)

PSA Parti Solidaire Africain

TASS Telegrafnoye Agentstvo Sovetskogo Soyuza (Telegraph

Agency of the Soviet Union)

UAR United Arab Republic

UMHK Union Minière du Haut Katanga USUN U.S. Mission to the United Nations

Battleground Africa

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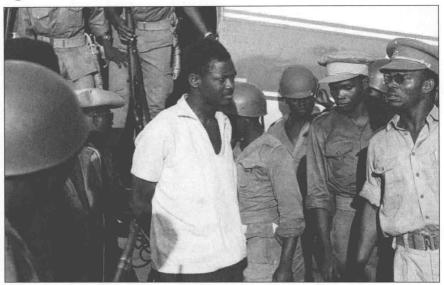
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Introduction

On February 13, 1961, Godefroid Munongo—the interior minister for Katanga, the Congo's secessionist province, and a loyal supporter of its leader, Moise Tshombe—made an announcement that had been expected. Munongo had a reputation for being cold and calculating, and his words equaled it. With reporters listening around the world, he told how the former Congolese prime minister, Patrice Lumumba—now an accused communist sympathizer—had escaped from prison and been killed by the angry inhabitants of a village through which he fled. Munongo preempted denunciations of foul play: "If people accuse us of killing Lumumba, I will reply, 'Prove it!" He then thanked the fictitious villager assassins by announcing a reward of \$8,000 for ridding the Congo and the world of "a problem" that had "menaced the existence of humanity."

What had actually happened to Lumumba was in fact even more gruesome than Munongo's story. On December 1, 1960, Lumumba fled across the Sankuru River on his way to Stanleyville, but he was overtaken by the forces of army chief Joseph Mobutu, who enjoyed "technical assistance" from the Belgian Sûreté (the former Belgian police force in the Congo, then operating out of Katanga) and the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). On orders from Congolese president Joseph Kasavubu, backed up by advice from the CIA station chief, Lawrence Devlin, Lumumba was quickly captured and brought to Camp Hardy in Thysville, a military prison near the capital city of Leopold-ville (figure I.1). Meanwhile, U.N. troops, as part of ONUC (Opération des Nations Unies au Congo, United Nations Operation in the Congo), stood by and refused to protect him. Despite the endless accusations that Lumumba was a communist puppet because he had accepted some aid from the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc, not one communist country came to his rescue.

Figure I.1. Lumumba Faces Mobutu after His Arrest, December 2, 1960



Source: Associated Press photograph, used with permission.

After pro-Lumumba riots erupted at Camp Hardy prison on the night of January 13, 1961, key Belgian officials in the Congo working for the government of Gaston Eyskens strongly urged Kasavubu to get rid of his infamous prisoner. Although Devlin himself expressed no objection, his silence in the context is indicative of tacit approval.²

In response, an apprehensive Kasavubu, along with Mobutu and Victor Nendaka, chief of the Sûreté Nationale (National Security Services), made an emergency trip to Thysville. Mobutu explained the daring trip to Devlin as an attempt to deal with the "all-or-nothing situation" there. The trio planned the transfer of Lumumba and two other prisoners—former minister of youth and sports Maurice Mpolo, and the former president of the Senate, Joseph Okito—to Bakwanga in Kasai Province. Nendaka was the one to shuffle the prisoners onto a small plane in the wee hours of January 17 and, en route, their destination was switched to Elizabethville, the capital of Katanga Province. All three were so badly beaten on the flight that the pilot, nauseated and disgusted, ordered the cockpit door shut. CIA agents in Elizabethville seemed unaware of what was going on, but wished otherwise. After the "package" had arrived, they thanked their superiors for sending Patrice, lamenting, "If we had known he was coming, we would have baked a snake."