

The Simba Rebellion, the Cold War, and the Stanleyville Hostages in the Congo

❖ Alanna O'Malley

Aggression has been committed. We know who committed it: they have been caught red-handed in flagrante delicto.¹

Ousman Ba, Representative of Mali to United Nations (UN)
Security Council, 10 December 1964

The fact is that racists and enemies of Africa, with joy in their hearts, have tried, by the vast means at their disposal, to set in motion a campaign alleging that this was all on the basis of racial relations.²

Arsene Usher, Ivory Coast Representative, 16 December 1964

On the morning of 24 November 1964, the local radio station in the northern Congolese city of Stanleyville (now Kisangani) broadcast a provocative announcement: “We have been stabbed in the back by the Belgians and the Americans. Take your machetes and kill the white people.”³ This ominous directive came as Belgian paratroopers were being airlifted into the city as part of Operation Dragon Rouge, a collaborative effort between the United States, Belgium, and Great Britain to rescue 1,000 U.S. and European citizens who had been held hostage since Stanleyville was seized by a rebel group known as the Simba in August 1964.⁴ The Simba were a ragtag group of rebels, rather than a disciplined army, who had usurped the authority of the Congolese government in Léopoldville and claimed large swaths of territory in northern and

1. Statement from Mr. Ba, Representative of Mali, to the United Nations Security Council during a Debate on the Stanleyville Intervention, 10 December 1964, in Public Records and Archives Administration Department of Ghana (PRAAD), Accra, Record Group (RG) 17/2/526, 30/12/1964, Security Council Official Records.

2. Statement from Mr. Usher, Representative of the Ivory Coast to the United Nations Security Council during the Debate on the Stanleyville Intervention, 16 December 1964, in PRAAD, RG 17/2/526, 30/12/1964, Security Council Official Records.

3. As recorded in David Reed, *111 Days in Stanleyville* (London: William Collins & Sons., 1966), pp. 249–250.

4. The rebels referred to themselves as “Simba,” which in the local language, Kiswahili, means “lion.”

eastern Congo as part of a rebellion against the corruption and dysfunction of the newly independent state.

The sight of paratroopers arriving served to confirm the rebels' worst fears of an "imperialist" intervention, and they reacted with alarm, urging their followers to exact revenge on the remaining European population in the city. Before the Belgian troops could secure the hostages, 60 were killed in the confusion as the rebels fled, before 1,800 Europeans and a further 400 Congolese were rescued.⁵ The Stanleyville episode has more often than not been considered part of the longer crisis that had beset the Congo since its independence from Belgium in June 1960. However, the rebellion and its results had significant repercussions for the relationship between Africa and the West. It served to delegitimize humanitarian reasoning as a basis for intervention until the end of the Cold War and highlighted the racial lens of Cold War politics in the Third World, thus raising the specter of imperialism and causing African states to set aside their political divisions temporarily to band together in defiance of what they rightly viewed as a strategy to divide them.

During a United Nations (UN) Security Council debate in the immediate aftermath of the intervention, a Chinese delegate described the Congo as a "cockpit for alien ambitions."⁶ Although he was referring to the various factions involved in the Stanleyville episode, he could have been describing almost any period in Congo's colonial or postcolonial history. After being "granted" to King Leopold of Belgium at the Berlin Conference of 1885, the territory and its vast resources of copper and rubber, among many others, were exploited for the personal wealth of the Belgian monarch. Following widespread outrage at the gross human rights abuses committed by Leopold's forces, the territory was taken over by the Belgian government, becoming the Belgian Congo in 1907. However, the Congolese people fared little better during the decades of colonialism, as the Belgians continued to extract Congo's raw materials. After a short period of agitation in the late 1950s, independence was suddenly announced for 30 June 1960. The Belgian government rapidly organized Congo's first national election in May 1960, and the hastily formed political parties, based on trade unions, ethnic groups, and regional associations, produced a clear majority for the Mouvement National Congolais (MNC) led by a young, energetic postal clerk named Patrice

5. Telephone Conversation between Harriman and Williams, 24 November 1964, in U.S. Library of Congress (LOC), Manuscripts Division, Averell Harriman Papers, Folder 5, Subject File Congo (1), Box 448, Subject Files, Congo, Special Files: Public Service, Kennedy/Administrations, 1958–1971.

6. Mr. Liu from China, Meeting of 16 December 1964, in PRAAD, RG 17/2/526, 30/12/1964, Security Council Official Records.

Lumumba. He had been educated in the Belgian system and had a deeply ideological approach to politics, believing the Congo should be made independent as quickly as possible. Ascending rapidly through the ranks of the MNC by virtue of his charisma, fiery oratory, and exceptionally broad-based appeal, Lumumba brought together Congolese people from different tribal and ethnic backgrounds who together spoke more than 200 languages.

Lumumba established an uneasy relationship with Belgian politicians from the beginning. To negotiate the new Congolese constitution (known as “Loi Fondamentale”) with Congolese politicians in Brussels in January 1960, he had been released from prison, where he was being held for inciting riots against the Belgian administration in the Congo. At the independence ceremony in Léopoldville (now Kinshasa) he gave an impromptu speech denouncing the “humiliating slavery” Belgium had imposed on the Congo, remarks that embarrassed King Baudouin of Belgium, who was present.⁷ Yet even though Lumumba could inspire nationalist fervor with his public speeches, his government faced huge challenges from the beginning. Brussels had announced in April 1960 that the Congolese economy was in dire shape and that Congo owed massive debts to Belgium. This was despite the vast resources of cobalt, tin, gold, and diamonds, in addition to copper and rubber that the Belgians had already extracted—and the ample resources still remaining. Lumumba’s main difficulty was that control of these resources and their extraction was mostly in the hands of private financial groups such as the Belgian Société General, which owned Union Minière du Haut Katanga, a mining company that controlled most of the mines and infrastructure in the east of the country. Compounding matters further, a week after independence the southeastern province of Katanga, where much of the mineral wealth was located, declared independence under Moïse Tshombe, leader of the Confédération des Associations Tribales du Katanga (CONAKAT) party, who was regarded by many as a Belgian puppet.⁸

Lumumba therefore immediately faced a crisis of economic and political sovereignty. To address the economic problems, he needed to regain control of Katanga’s resources and renegotiate colonial agreements with private investors and financial groups. At the same time, he had to restore territorial integrity to the Congo as a whole and end the secession. To do so, he turned to the United Nations for help. The UN Security Council responded by dispatching

7. Speech by Patrice Lumumba Given at the Inauguration Ceremony in the Congolese Capital Léopoldville to Mark the Official Beginning of Congolese Independence, 30 June 1960, in The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNAUK), Foreign Office Files, FO371/146639.

8. Thomas R. Kanza, *Conflict in the Congo* (London: Penguin Books, 1972).

the largest peacekeeping mission ever mandated up to that point, along with an accompanying civilian mission to assist the country with state-building. The peacekeeping mission was problematic in almost every way. Not only was it underfunded and poorly prepared, but a significant difference of opinion existed between UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, who believed troops should keep the peace between the central government in Léopoldville and Tshombe's secessionist regime in Elisabethville (now Lubumbashi), and Lumumba, who believed the peacekeepers should quash the secession. When it became clear to Lumumba by August 1960 that the peacekeepers would not be deployed against Katangese forces, he launched his own military campaign. Tshombe's gendarmerie, however, was well-funded by Belgian interest groups and trained by white mercenaries, and it easily defeated Lumumba's forces.

Layered atop the internal politics of the Congo, which deteriorated rapidly from early September 1960, when Lumumba was deposed by Congolese President Joseph Kasavubu to January 1961, when Lumumba was assassinated by Belgian intelligence officials with the collaboration of Tshombe, was the Cold War dimension. The existing literature on the Congo crisis from 1960 to 1965 tends to emphasize the ways Cold War politics crept into the country as the conflict threatened to become a "hot war" between the superpowers.⁹ Britain, Belgium, and particularly the United States increasingly perceived control of the Congo and its resources as being of central importance in the struggle against the spread of Communism in Africa. U.S. officials were concerned that the Soviet Union would gain access to Congolese uranium, which had been used in building the first nuclear bomb.¹⁰ Moreover, officials in the U.S. State Department were concerned that, if the Congo adopted a Soviet-style regime, it would become a hotbed of Communist activity and threaten the stability of pro-Western newly independent states across Africa. Although Sergey Mazov and others have maintained that the Soviet Union did not have a concerted campaign to gain influence within Congo, officials in the

9. For more on the Congo crisis, see Madeleine G. Kalb, *The Congo Cables: The Cold War in Africa—From Eisenhower to Kennedy* (New York: Macmillan, 1982); Catherine Hoskyns, *The Congo since Independence, January 1960–December 1961* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1965); Richard D. Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in the Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Lise Namikas, *Battleground Africa: Cold War in the Congo 1960–1965* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); Susan Williams, *Who Killed Hammarskjöld? The UN, The Cold War and White Supremacy in Africa* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2011); and Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo: Decolonization and Independence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

10. For more on uranium, see Jonathon E. Helmreich, "The Uranium Negotiations of 1944," in *Le Congo Belge Durant la seconde guerre mondiale: Recueil d'études* (Brussels: Académie Royales des Sciences d'Outre-Mer, 1983), pp. 253-284.

U.S. State Department and National Security Council (NSC) saw things differently at the time. The NSC gave the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) considerable scope to influence Congolese politics, in the hope of securing a pro-Western leader after Lumumba's demise.¹¹ The State Department covered most of the costs of the UN peacekeeping mission and granted huge political and material support to the Léopoldville government, which eventually led to the election of Cyrille Adoula as prime minister in 1961. The Cold War thus was intricately intertwined in Congolese politics from the beginning.

Cold War considerations also led Belgium and Britain to share the U.S. objective that the Congo should be an ally of the West. However, the governments in Brussels and London also had their own interests in the Congo, for which the Cold War imperative provided a convenient veil. Belgium granted extensive financial and political support to Tshombe's regime in Katanga until a UN military action ended the secession in December 1962. From then on, officials turned their attention toward the Léopoldville government, with Brussels providing more than 1,900 political advisers to help reorganize the country's economy and military.¹² Many of these so called advisers were officials from the financial group Société General and the mining company Union Minière who acted to guarantee both the financial interests of their companies and the political interests of the Belgian government. The British government shared Belgian concerns about maintaining financial interests in the Congo and in particular sought to preserve the role of Tanganyika Concessions, a London-based umbrella group that managed British investments in the Congo, mainly along the copper-belt that ran through Katanga. British officials viewed the Congo as a dangerous precedent for decolonization and an example of what could happen when independence was granted too quickly. They feared that the fragmentation of the Congo would lead to instability in the remaining British colonies on the Congo's eastern border, particularly Rhodesia, Nyasaland, and Tanganyika.

11. On the Soviet role, see Ilya V. Gaiduk, *Divided Together: The United States and the Soviet Union in the United Nations, 1945–1965* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); Alessandro Iandolo, "Beyond the Shoe: Rethinking Khrushchev at the Fifteenth Session of the United Nations General Assembly," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2017), pp. 128–154; and Sergey Mazov, *A Distant Front in the Cold War: The USSR in West Africa and the Congo, 1965–1964* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010). On the role of the CIA in the Congo, see Ludo De Witte, "The Suppression of the Congo Rebellions and the Rise of Mobutu 1963–5," *International History Review*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2017), pp. 107–125; Larry Devlin, *Chief of Station Congo: A Memoir of 1960–67* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007); and Piero Gleijeses, "The CIA's Paramilitary Operations during the Cold War: An Assessment," *Cold War History*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2016), pp. 291–306.

12. C.R.I.S.P., *Congo 1965: Political Documents of a Developing Nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 291–309.

In addition to these two dimensions, the significance of the Congo crisis in international politics also stemmed from the country's importance to other African countries and the Afro-Asian group at the UN.¹³ This element has not been given sufficient weight in the literature and deserves more attention, particularly because the Stanleyville intervention brings it into focus. A host of African countries had declared themselves to be staunch allies of the Congo and of Lumumba from the beginning of the crisis. After his assassination in January 1961, the African group at the UN divided into two factions: the Monrovia group, including Cameroon, Nigeria, Senegal, and most of Franco-phone Africa, which advocated a moderate solution to the crisis of Katangese secession and opted for a negotiated solution; and the Casablanca group, including Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Libya, Mali, and Morocco, which viewed the Congo as justification for an outright attack on colonialism and imperialism. Given the multiple Western interests in the Congo, the Africa group agreed that the conflict should not be made part of the Cold War, an opinion that was shared by countries such as India and Indonesia, which contributed large numbers of troops to the UN peacekeeping mission and advocated a nonaligned position with the Afro-Asian group. The public debates about the Congo conflict were a formative moment for the emergence of the Third World as a political force. Many African and Asian UN representatives considered the conflict the worst-case scenario for decolonization, revealing the fluidity of sovereignty and the willingness of imperial powers to interfere in African affairs.¹⁴

The conflict in the Congo therefore was a multilevel crisis that pitched various parties against one another as they fought over territory, power, and resources but also debated the limits of sovereignty, the difficulties of postcolonial state-building, and the interaction of the Cold War with decolonization. The Stanleyville intervention is most often viewed as part of this longer period of internationalized conflict in the Congo from 1960 onward, but the rebellion can also be seen as a separate moment that was different from the Congo's earlier crises after independence. First, the Simba rebellion was a part of, but not formally connected to, a series of other rebellions that had spread across the country as the UN peacekeeping force quietly withdrew in 1964. In 1963, Pierre Mulele, who had served as minister for education in Lumumba's short-lived government, led a revolt in the province of Kwilu, in central Congo.

13. For additional information on the importance of the Congo crisis for UN politics, see Alanna O'Malley, *The Diplomacy of Decolonisation: America, Britain and the United Nations during the Congo Crisis 1960–64* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2018).

14. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Mulele had traveled to Cairo in 1962 to raise support for the remaining Lumumbists and, after a period of training in the People's Republic of China (PRC), organized his rebellion from the neighboring Congo-Brazzaville before returning to Kwilu in 1963.¹⁵ He and his followers became social agitators in villages around the province, lauding the memory of Lumumba and promising social and economic reform.¹⁶ Mulele created a cult-like following whose members were often "indoctrinated" in long information sessions on the ills of the state and the corruption of the central government.¹⁷ The Muleleists, as the group became known, were fearless fighters despite often being armed with primitive weapons, and they successfully resisted the Armée Nationale Congolaise (ANC), which was hastily dispatched to quash the rebellion.

Separately, an uprising took hold in eastern and northern Congo led by former Lumumba supporters Christophe Gbenye, Gaston Soumialot, and Martin Kassongo of the Parti Solidaire Africain. The city of Stanleyville had been Lumumba's home ground and remained a hotbed of political activity after his death. In February 1961, his former deputy Antoine Gizenga established a provisional government there in protest against the central government in Léopoldville, which had been complicit in Lumumba's death. Protesting Lumumba's murder at the hands of Belgium and the collaborating politicians in the Congolese capital, Gizenga eventually gained the support of the Soviet Union, which recognized the legitimacy of his provisional government in the aftermath of the Lumumba assassination.¹⁸ Although Gizenga was arrested in 1962 and languished in prison until 1965, the zeal of resistance in the northern province of Orientale persisted. When the authorities announced in 1964 that Tshombe, who had been deposed from his provisional government in Katanga in 1962, would be reintroduced into the central government as prime minister, Gbenye and Soumialot set about organizing a revolt.

15. The name Pierre Mulele particularly set alarm bells ringing in Washington, DC. A memorandum on Chinese Communist involvement in the Congo noted that Mulele had "received training in communist China itself." Memorandum on Chinese Communist Involvement in the Congo, n.d., in LC, Averell Harriman Papers, Box 448, Folder 5, Subject File Congo (1), Subject Files, Congo, Special Files: Public Service, Kennedy/Administrations, 1958–1971.

16. For more on the Kwilu rebellion, see Benoit Verhaegen, *Rebellions au Congo*, Vol. 1 (Brussels: Centre de Recherché et d'Information Socio-Politiques, 1966), pp. 37–65.

17. Renée C. Fox, Wily de Craemer, and Jean-Marie Ribeaucourt, "'The Second Independence': A Case Study of the Kwilu Rebellion in the Congo," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (1965), p. 94.

18. For more on the assassination of Lumumba, see Emmanuel Gerard and Bruce Kuklick, *Death in the Congo: Murdering Patrice Lumumba* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015); Ludo de Witte, *The Assassination of Lumumba* (London: Jacana Media, 2005); and Stephen R. Weissman, "An Extraordinary Rendition," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2010), pp. 198–222.

The selection of Tshombe, still considered by many Congolese to be a Belgian stooge, was an effort on the part of the central government to stabilize the Congo and pacify Katangese separatists. Belgium and the United States openly supported the move, viewing Tshombe, with his connections to Belgian and British financial groups, as precisely the kind of Congolese politician they could, quite literally, do business with.¹⁹ The decision to introduce him into the national government was extensively discussed and coordinated with the British and the Belgians, who used their own networks to advance the idea among Congolese politicians.²⁰ However, Tshombe's appointment was widely unpopular among the Congolese people and other African leaders. One official described it as equivalent to "leading a bandwagon built of despair, disillusionment, friction and opportunism."²¹ Ghana's Foreign Minister Kojo Botsio was particularly critical, publicly announcing that Tshombe had been "forced on the [Congolese] people by bribery and other means of subversion."²²

Inevitably, Tshombe's reemergence in Congolese politics and the perception that the central government was controlled by Western interests had the effect of increasing the popularity of the rebel movement and adding legitimacy to its cause. Having fled the Congo after Lumumba's assassination, Gbenye, Soumialot, and Kassongo had set up a provincial government in Brazzaville, called the Comite National de Libération (CNL). Promising to oust Adoula, which they attempted to do via a series of failed efforts to kidnap him in Léopoldville, they formed an armed resistance movement with a group of mostly young, disenfranchised Congolese fighters who became known as the Simba. The Simba rebels shared some of the characteristics of the Muleleists. Despite lacking weapons and training, they were brave fighters, unafraid to confront the ANC soldiers.²³ Moreover, they and other rebel

19. Telegram, Dean at the U.S. consulate in Elisabethville to the Department of State, 8 February 1963, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1960–1963*, Vol. XX: Congo Crisis, p. 837 (hereinafter referred to as *FRUS*, with appropriate year and volume number).

20. Telegram, Brussels to the Foreign Office, 30 November 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

21. The official served at the U.S. embassy in Léopoldville and is quoted in Piero Gleijeses, "Flee! The White Giants Are Coming!": The United States, the Mercenaries and the Congo, 1964–65," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1994), p. 211.

22. Conversation between the Prime Minister and Kojo Botsio, the Foreign Minister of Ghana, at 10 Downing Street, 23 November 1964, 5:30 pm, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

23. That Congolese soldiers often fled in fear of the rebels is asserted in a report from a Methodist medical missionary, Dr. William S. Hughlett, who was evacuated from northern Congo on 15 October 1964. See Memorandum of Conversation, Department of State, 30 November 1964, in National

groups shared a commitment to social change. Since independence, the income and position of most Congolese had deteriorated rather than improved. The political volatility led to economic instability that was exacerbated by a struggle with the private financial groups, such as the Société General, which continued to control the processing of most of the Congo's raw materials. The daily Congolese newspaper *Courier d'Afrique* described the situation on 19 May 1963:

if no one dares do anything that is not ordered from the outside by the sharks of high finance, the Congo will become a lost Paradise. The Government of the country is faced with a dilemma; either they have to concern themselves with the interests of the people by bravely repelling any attempts from outside, or else they must accept their failure by renouncing their political mandate.²⁴

Although the rebels openly accepted support from the PRC, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, and the Soviet Union, this was largely opportunistic. They were driven not by Communist or socialist ideology but by a desire to improve the standard of living for ordinary Congolese.

By September 1964, one third of the Congo was under the control of various rebel groups, and Stanleyville—which had been seized by the CNL on 5 August—was declared the de facto seat of the alternative government. The regime was officially recognized by several African states, including Algeria and Ghana, whose leaders had openly protested the selection of Tshombe as prime minister. Other states, including Tanzania, did nothing to block the supply lines to the Simba across Lake Tanganyika.²⁵ As the rebels took control of the city, they massacred thousands of Congolese, including government administrators, police officers, and schoolteachers they believed had been “Westernized.”²⁶ The Simba also rounded up several hundred white merchants, traders, missionaries, and government officials, including British and Belgian citizens, and held them in the Victoria Hotel in the center of the city. Among these was the U.S. consul, Michael Hoyt, Vice Consul David Grinwis (whose post was cover for his real role as chief of the CIA station in Stanleyville), and several

Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland, Central Foreign Policy File, 1964–1966, Political and Defense, Box 2729, RG 59, POL 23-9, The Congo, 11/30/64.

24. As quoted by the Burundian representative in the Security Council, Meeting of 16 December 1964, in PRAAD, RG 17/2/526, 30/12/1964, Security Council Official Records.

25. Jeffrey H. Michaels, “Breaking the Rules: The CIA and Counterinsurgency in the Congo 1964–1965,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (2012), p. 148.

26. Report by the Secretary General on the Withdrawal of the United Nations Force in the Congo and of Other Aspects of the Operation There, in United Nations Archives (UNA), New York, Records of the Office for Special Political Affairs, United Nations Archives, U Thant Secretary General Files, S-0888-0006-08.

other officials who had been taken hostage when the rebels seized control of the consulate.²⁷ The group included 20–30 Britons, 59 Americans (including 15 women and 28 children), and a selection of white settlers from other European countries.²⁸ The hostages were held as leverage for negotiations with the central government and also as an act of retaliation against the U.S., British, and other European nationals in Stanleyville, whose countries of origin had largely supported Tshombe.

Even while capturing white hostages, the Simba rebels gained control of two thirds of the country and advanced within 100 kilometers of Léopoldville, spurring the central government to step up its defenses. With the aid of U.S. and British officials, the Congolese authorities enlisted thousands of mercenary fighters to combat the rebel forces. The white legionnaires, led by a Briton, Colonel Mike Hoare, were mainly British and Belgian and worked in conjunction with the ANC to stamp out rebellions throughout the country. At the behest of the U.S. State Department, the Belgian government dispatched the Flemish military adviser Colonel Frederick Vandewalle to the Congo to reorganize the army and lead the mission to quell the rebellion alongside Hoare. In addition, the State Department sent U.S. military officers to Léopoldville to train Congolese army officers and develop a military strategy.²⁹ Tshombe and the Congolese government, severely weakened by the collapse of the country, and widely unpopular outside the capital, had little choice but to accept the Belgian, British, and U.S. “advisers.” The hostage situation confronted these Western powers with the problem of the Stanleyville rebellion directly, but it also presented an opportunity. The rebels’ acceptance of aid from the PRC and the Soviet Union (although there is no evidence that they ever actually received any aid) was enough to classify them as Communist in the eyes of U.S. officials.³⁰ As a result, the same Cold War objectives of defeating the spread of Soviet influence within the Congo, which had played such an important part in the earlier crisis, now resurfaced in discussions of how to deal with the situation in Stanleyville.

27. For Hoyt’s personal account of being held hostage, see Michael P. E. Hoyt, interview, 30 January 1995, Las Cruces, NM, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, in LC, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/mss/mfdip/2004/2004hoy01/2004hoy01.pdf>.

28. Copy of Ticker Report, “Lead Congolese,” November 1964, in LOC, Harriman Papers.

29. Telegram from the Department of State to the U.S. Embassy in Léopoldville, 7 August 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2721, POL 23-9, Rebellions, Coups, The Congo, 16/8/64.

30. Numerous reports incorrectly refer to the rebels as Communist because they accepted arms and aid from the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China. See, for example, Telegram from YS Mission Geneva to the Department of State, 27 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2728, POL 23-9, The Congo, 11/27/64.

Although Lise Namikas has argued that “no-one in the Johnson administration wanted to talk about direct U.S. intervention in the Congo,” sources reveal that some form of intervention into Stanleyville was being considered by the State Department from at least 6 August 1964, primarily with a focus on European cooperation given escalating U.S. commitments to the war in Vietnam.³¹ Domestically, President Lyndon B. Johnson was faced with a series of riots through the summer of 1964, as members of the Ku Klux Klan attacked civil rights activists in retaliation for the signing of the Civil Rights Act in July.³² Confronted with the potential of a military conflict in the Congo, one already perceived to have Communist elements, the State Department stepped up pressure on European allies to take the lead in securing U.S. interests in Africa. Secretary of State Rusk sent instructions to the U.S. embassy in Brussels calling for stronger Belgian assistance for U.S. policy in the Congo.³³ In a conversation with British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Averell Harriman sought British support, a request that was soon fulfilled.³⁴ Harriman also appealed to Belgian Foreign Minister Paul-Henri Spaak to send further military aid, advisers, and supplies to shore up the Congolese government forces. Western diplomats in Léopoldville pressed Tshombe and Kasavubu (who remained president) to appeal to other African states for aid and to work with the newly formed Organization of African Unity (OAU) to negotiate the release of the hostages. But, fearing the interference of other African countries in Congolese affairs, Kasavubu and Tshombe issued only a limited appeal for support.³⁵ They continued to insist to their Western allies that the Congolese army could defeat the rebels if more materiel support was granted. Behind the scenes, however, the rescue mission that was being planned would undercut the OAU negotiations and definitively crush the rebellion.

31. A telegram from the State Department to the U.S. embassy in Brussels asks: “What assistance might be forthcoming from a joint military force of the Six[?] What help can we be to you if you should take the lead in the organization of such a European rescue mission[?]” See Telegram, State Department to U.S. embassy Brussels, 6 August 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2721, POL 23-9, Rebellion, Coups, The Congo, 6/8/64.

32. Namikas, *Battleground Africa*, p. 198.

33. Telegram, Rusk in the State Department to the U.S. Embassy in Brussels with Instructions for Communications with Belgian Officials, 6 August 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2721, POL 23-9, Rebellion, Coups, The Congo, 6/8/64.

34. Meeting between Harold Wilson and Dean Rusk, 29 January 1965, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/901.

35. Memorandum for McGeorge Bundy, the White House, from Averell Harriman, State Department, 17 August 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2721, POL 23-9, Rebellion, Coups, The Congo, 16/8/64.

Operation Dragon Rouge—Stanleyville

Once the hostage situation erupted in Stanleyville, the OAU moved quickly to form an ad hoc committee led by Jomo Kenyatta, the Kenyan president, to negotiate with the rebels, who were represented by Thomas Kanza, Lumumba's former UN ambassador. On behalf of the Western powers, William Attwood, the U.S. ambassador to Kenya, was appointed to negotiate but made little progress. Kenyatta and Kanza claimed that a ceasefire between the rebels and the ANC was a prerequisite for any action to save the hostages, including sending OAU representatives to Stanleyville.³⁶ For the Western powers that were heavily invested in the military campaign and mindful of the rebels' success, a ceasefire was not an option. Therefore, as the ANC forces led by Vandewalle and Hoare started to make headway against the rebels and advanced toward Stanleyville, the hostage situation escalated. The rebels were gradually pushed back into Orientale Province through September as they faced an organized and brutal campaign by the ANC. Internally, discord emerged between the rebel leaders Gbenye and Somialot and the self-appointed General Nicolas Olenga, who was leading the military defense of Stanleyville. As tensions mounted on all sides, the rebels accelerated their threats against the hostages. They selected several U.S. nationals, including Grinwis and a young missionary doctor named Paul Carlson for an ad hoc "trial" on charges of espionage and found them "guilty." On 12 November, they were sentenced to public execution in front of a statue of Lumumba, as a symbol of resistance to the ANC and the Western powers. Two days later, the rebels announced that the execution of the two men could be avoided only if the ANC advance on Stanleyville was halted.³⁷

By this point, efforts to arrange the rescue mission were firmly under way between Brussels, London, and Washington, but the three governments disagreed about when the intervention would take place. The British worried that other African countries would perceive a military intervention as further action in favor of Tshombe's government, a perception that would adversely

36. Reports of the Negotiations with the OAU from Attwood in Nairobi to the State Department, 22–23 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1964–1966, Box 2727, POL 23-9, Rebellions, Coups, The Congo.

37. Telegram, U.S. Embassy in Léopoldville to the State Department, Detailing the Week's Developments in Congo, 19 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2701, Folder 1 General Policy Background, The Congo, POL 2-1 Joint Weekas, The Congo, 7/1/64, 1964–1966.

affect Commonwealth interests in neighboring countries.³⁸ In addition, Foreign Office officials believed that intervention would pose a risk to the security of British bases in Africa.³⁹ The UK government eventually agreed to participate by allowing the rescue planes to land at the British base on Ascension Island. When a media leak revealed that Belgian troops were massing on the island in preparation for an invasion, the Belgian government was forced to admit that an intervention was being planned. African leaders such as Kenyatta publicly criticized U.S. and Belgian assistance to Tshombe.⁴⁰ Planning for the rescue was hampered further by disagreements between the U.S. State Department and the UK Foreign Office about who was responsible for leaking details of the rescue mission and thus further endangering the hostages. An irate Harriman told U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rusk: "Haven't concerted with the British . . . the leak came out of London."⁴¹ In reaction to the news of a planned military intervention, the rebels accelerated their threats against the hostages, who began writing goodbye letters.⁴²

Suffering heavy losses against the ANC, Gbenye agreed on 22 November to a last-ditch attempt to negotiate with Attwood regarding the fate of the hostages. Kenyatta and Diallo Telli, the secretary general of the OAU, were asked to monitor the negotiations. This time Attwood appealed for the rebels to allow a Red Cross plane to evacuate the hostages, but Kanza refused unless the mercenary-led ANC halted its advance.⁴³ Kenyatta supported Kanza's position, a move that Attwood and the State Department interpreted as OAU support for the rebels. The State Department concluded that the OAU talks

38. Record of Conversation between Dr. Kaunda, the President of the Republic of Zambia and the Prime Minister, at 10 Downing Street, 13 November 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

39. Note for the Record, "Trouble in Stanleyville," 12 November 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

40. Telegram to the Commonwealth Relations Office from Nairobi, 13 November 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

41. Telephone Conversation between Harriman and Rusk, 20 November 1964, 12:10 pm, in LOC, Harriman Papers, Box 448, Subject Files, Congo, Special Files: Public Service, Kennedy/Administrations, 1958-1971, Folder 5, Subject File Congo (1).

42. The U.S. consul, Michael Hoyt, who had been held prisoner by the rebels since 5 August, wrote a "goodbye" message on 21 November 1964. See Telegram from Attwood in Nairobi to the Department of State, 21 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2727, POL 23-9, The Congo, 21/11/1964.

43. A report from the U.S. Secretary of State to the OAU on 24 November states that the requests for the Red Cross to remove sick and injured hostages received "no response from the rebels." See Official Statement of the Secretary of State to the member of the Organization of African Unity on the Issues Regarding the Congo, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1964-1966, Box 2728, POL 23-9, Rebellions, Coups, The Congo.

were fruitless, and by 23 November Attwood had relayed that “no headway [was] possible.”⁴⁴ On the same day, Radio Stanleyville read a statement from the rebels threatening to burn the hostages alive and encouraging Lumumba supporters to attack all foreigners if Stanleyville was invaded.

With the apparent failure of diplomatic efforts, which had been significantly undermined by the revelation of military planning for the intervention, the die was cast for the mission to take place. On 24 November, Operation Dragon Rouge was launched. Some 350 Belgian paratroopers were flown into Stanleyville airport in ten U.S. C-130 planes. From the airport they proceeded to the Victoria Hotel to rescue the hostages. The operation was of limited success. As soon as the Belgian paratroopers landed, the rebels scattered, and fighting broke out. In the melee that followed, Carlson was killed by gunfire (whether from the rebels or the Belgians remains unclear), despite having survived his planned execution. A short time later the ANC and mercenary army arrived in Stanleyville and proceeded to rout the Simba, in the process slaughtering 10,000–20,000 Congolese in retribution for their perceived collaboration with the rebels.⁴⁵

The mercenaries' killing of thousands of Congolese citizens further stoked international outrage at the cavalier actions of the Western powers. Other humanitarian missions to rescue European hostages in eastern Congo were subsequently thrown into disarray. On Wednesday, 25 November, an action code-named Operation Dragon Noir was carried out with 256 Belgian soldiers airlifted into Paulis (now Isiro), a town in northeast Congo, to rescue several hundred white hostages held by Simba rebels. Spurred by a broadcast instruction the previous day from Gbenye to execute all white people in rebel hands, presumably in retaliation for the Stanleyville intervention, the Simba rebels beat to death 22 white hostages and murdered 2,000–4,000 Congolese “collaborators” by forcing them to drink gasoline and setting them on fire.⁴⁶ Although the Paulis mission succeeded in saving 355 white hostages, the escalating brutality of the Simba, combined with the international condemnation, resulted in the cancellation of further rescue missions to rebel-held areas in northern Congo. Despite the atrocities now being committed on all sides, an internal State Department memorandum concluded that although the rebel policy of “mass liquidation of educated and trained Congolese” was in flagrant

44. Reports of the Negotiations with the OAU from Attwood in Nairobi to the State Department, 22–23 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1964–1966, Box 2727, POL 23-9, Rebellions, Coups, The Congo.

45. Namikas, *Battleground Africa*, p. 208.

46. Reed, *111 Days in Stanleyville*, p. 268.

violation of Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and threatened the future of the Congo, other channels of communication with the rebels, including through the OAU and the Red Cross, were the only way forward.⁴⁷

The course of events, with its clear racial dimensions, had disastrous consequences and longer political repercussions. The Belgian, British, and U.S. governments immediately issued statements to a host of African leaders announcing that the operation had been strictly humanitarian in nature and was in no way an attempt to impose a political solution on the Congo.⁴⁸ This was despite the continued air support the CIA was organizing for ANC columns and mercenaries advancing against the rebels.⁴⁹ The United States sought to distance itself publicly from the mercenaries in particular, instructing the embassy in Léopoldville that “open identification” between the United States and the mercenaries, as well as between the rescue mission and the ANC operation, was to be avoided.⁵⁰ On the basis of the intervention alone, many African and Asian states perceived the mission as an aggressive act by three imperialist powers. Indonesian Foreign Minister Subandrio told the press: “Indonesia strongly protests imperialist intervention in Congo. . . . Use of foreign troops to oppress people is old practice in South-East Asia employed in Vietnam and Malaysia.”⁵¹ No amount of humanitarian arguments could convince leaders such as Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ben Bella, who declared that the “pretext of hostages would deceive no-one.”⁵² Focusing on the violation of Congolese sovereignty, disregard for international norms governing the use of force, and the racist dimensions of the indiscriminate slaughter by the mercenaries of “thousands and thousands” of Congolese, the African states now joined together to secure through the UN a formal legal condemnation of Western policy in the Congo.⁵³

47. Confidential Memorandum from the Department of State to U.S. Mission in Geneva, 30 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2729, POL 23-9, The Congo.

48. Confidential Note for the Prime Minister Outlining the British Position on the Stanleyville Intervention, 25 November 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

49. Tom Wicker et al., “How C.I.A. Put ‘Instant Air Force’ into Congo,” *The New York Times*, 26 April 1966, p. 1. See further, Jonathan Kwitny, *Endless Enemies: The Making of an Unfriendly World* (New York: Congdon & Weed, 1984), pp. 49–85.

50. Telegram, Department of State to the U.S. Embassy in Léopoldville, 27 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2728, POL 23-9, The Congo 11/27/64.

51. Quoted in Telegram, U.S. Embassy in Jakarta to the State Department, 30 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2728, POL 23-9, The Congo, 11/30/64.

52. Telegram, British Embassy in Algiers to the Foreign Office reporting the statement of Ben Bella, 25 November 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

53. “Thousands and thousands of Congolese citizens, without distinction, have been massacred by the two armies involved. The destruction caused by military equipment provided to them by both sides,

Fallout at the UN, December 1964

The Stanleyville mission immediately raised a public storm of protest at the UN, where African and Asian representatives pressed for a Security Council meeting to condemn the actions of Belgium, Britain, and the United States. Despite the repeated denial by Brussels, London, and Washington that the intervention was an effort to protect their political and economic interests in the Congo, 21 states in the Afro-Asian bloc considered the arguments of humanitarian intervention to be a pretext for a neocolonial strike against the rebels. The African states, in particular, were determined to make the intervention an issue at the UN to validate a broader critique of Western policies across the continent.⁵⁴ They were fortified in their efforts by demonstrations around the world opposing the intervention. From Belgium to Bulgaria, China to Czechoslovakia, violent protests took place at U.S., British, and Belgian embassies. In one instance, the Belgian government was so incensed at a protest led by the General Union of Congolese Students in Brussels that it promptly withdrew scholarships from all Congolese students in Belgium.⁵⁵ In the United Arab Republic, protesters burned down the library of the U.S. Information Service; in Nairobi, crowds called for President Lyndon Johnson to be executed.⁵⁶

In response, U.S. representatives continued to insist that the mission had been used only to rescue hostages and was not part of a wider strategy to crush the Simba rebellion.⁵⁷ At the UN, U.S. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson attempted to deflect the African group's criticism by arguing that this was solely a matter of concern for the Congolese government and was not connected with the ANC military campaign against the Simba, despite the army's timely arrival into Stanleyville just days after the intervention of the Belgian

by virtue of usage and custom, topography of villages, construction materials for the houses and so on, give me the notion that this is a hecatomb, for which the adjective apocalyptic—having due regard to all proportions—would not, I feel, be exaggerated.” See Statement from Mr. Usher, 16 December 1964.

54. Statement of Chief S. O. Adebo (Nigeria) on Behalf of the African Group at the UN Announcing the Abhorrence of Members at the Intervention, 25 November 1964, in UNA, S0279, Box 3, File 19, Congo-Stanleyville Incidents—Missionaries, November 1964.

55. Telegram, U.S. Embassy in Brussels to the Department of State, 27 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1964–1966, Box 2728, POL 23-9, Rebellion, Coups, The Congo.

56. “U.S. Presses Cairo on Embassy Riot,” *The New York Times*, 28 November 1964, p. 2.

57. In a letter to the president of the UN Security Council, Stevenson denied that the U.S. mission to rescue hostages in Stanleyville was a pretext for military intervention. Adlai Stevenson to the President of the UN Security Council, 26 November 1964, in UNA, S0279, Box 3, File 19, Congo-Stanleyville Incidents—Missionaries, November 1964.

paratroopers. Fearing that the Soviet Union would seize upon this moment of chaos to strengthen relations with African countries, the State Department pointed out to officials in London that “by meddling in each other’s affairs the Africans also risk encouraging the big powers to meddle.”⁵⁸ Belgium and the UK supported the U.S. position, with British officials privately noting that, if the Africans themselves had acted constructively, foreign intervention might have been avoided.⁵⁹ Sir Hugh Foot, the British ambassador to the UN, delivered a strongly worded speech before the Security Council defending the action in Stanleyville and echoing State Department sentiments that the Congo’s problems had to be solved from within the Congo itself and not be hampered by the interference of other African nations.⁶⁰ Pointing to the limited support given by African states to the Congolese government as evidence of internal disagreement within the OAU and the African group, Western delegates settled on a strategy of attempting to divide the African group by highlighting the isolation of the Congolese government.

Given the unpopularity of Tshombe and his government and widespread support for the rebels, the Western allegation that African states had been slow to offer aid to Léopoldville contained a kernel of truth. However, confronting them with this allegation at the UN only encouraged more-conservative African states to protest the intervention and what was (correctly) perceived to be a deliberate effort to divide the African group. For example, although the Ivory Coast and Morocco did not sign the initial letter condemning the actions in Stanleyville, their representatives delivered impassioned speeches during the UN debates, declaring their solidarity with the critiques advanced by the more outspoken African states. Even governments that had formerly been friendly toward the West, such as that of Sirr Al-Khatim Al-Khalifa in Khartoum, were openly critical of the humanitarian defense. Within Sudan’s conservative regime, many high-level officials sympathized with the rebels and issued public statements of support for the “nationalist insurgents against imperialists and their collaborators.”⁶¹ Some African states particularly objected

58. Confidential telegram, Washington to the Foreign Office, 11 December 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

59. Record of meeting between British and Canadian officials at the Canadian Parliament, including Commonwealth Secretary Arthur Bottomley and Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, Paul Martin, 9 December 1964, 10 a.m., in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/104, WO 32.

60. Text of a speech delivered by the UK Permanent Representative at the UN, Sir Hugh Foot, to the UN Security Council, 15 December 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

61. Telegram, U.S. embassy in Khartoum to the State Department, relating the public statement of Sudan’s Minister for Irrigation Ahmed El Sayed Hamid in support of the Simba rebels after the

to the way the newly formed OAU had been undermined. The Algerian representative to the Security Council alleged that the United States had engaged in deceit by entering negotiations with the OAU at the same time that a military operation was being prepared in lieu of a diplomatic solution.⁶² However, the Congolese government, despite having only reluctantly acquiesced in the intervention at the last possible moment, defended the action.⁶³ Tshombe further alienated himself from his African colleagues by highlighting the failure of the OAU negotiations and the necessity of the rescue operation, which he insisted was “undertaken for a strictly humanitarian purpose.”⁶⁴

As tensions escalated, U.S. and British delegates turned to UN Secretary General U Thant (who had replaced Hammarskjöld after his death in 1961) in an effort to secure a more moderate resolution. A memorandum from the State Department on 30 November described the “arm-twisting atmosphere” that pervaded UN meetings.⁶⁵ The British representatives spelled this out even more clearly, reporting to the Foreign Office, “the impression here is that the Africans have no clear objectives other than to condemn Belgium, United States and United Kingdom ‘intervention.’”⁶⁶ British Foreign Secretary Gordon Walker further relayed that the “present situation in the UN was very bad.”⁶⁷ To improve relations with the African group, U.S. and British representatives now urged Thant to weigh in. However, the Secretary General quickly rebuffed their suggestion to send a Special Representative to

intervention, 27 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files 1964–1966, Box 2728, POL 23-9, Rebellion, Coups, The Congo.

62. Statement of Mr. Bouattoura, Representative of Algeria to the United Nations Security Council during the Debate on the Stanleyville Intervention, 10 December 1964, in PRAAD RG 17/2/526, Security Council Official Records, 30/12/1964.

63. A telegram from the U.S. embassy in Léopoldville to the Department of State reported that Congolese President Joseph Kasavubu “only with great reluctance acquiesced to authorizing humanitarian effort.” This reluctance, according to Tshombe and Mobutu, had resulted from anticipation of the widespread criticism the action would draw from the Congolese press against the Léopoldville government. See Telegram, U.S. embassy in Léopoldville to the Department of State, 21 November 1964, in NARA, RG59, Central Foreign Policy File, Box 2727, POL 23-9, The Congo, 21/11/64.

64. Tshombe to Count De Kerchove De Denterghem, Ambassador of Belgium in Léopoldville, in UNA, S0279, Box 3, File 19, Congo-Stanleyville Incidents—Missionaries, November 1964.

65. Confidential Memorandum from the Department of State to U.S. Mission in Geneva, 30 November 1964, in NARA, RG 59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Box 2729, POL 23-9, The Congo.

66. Telegram, UK Mission to the UN in New York to the Foreign Office, 2 December 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16. See also Confidential Telegram, New York to the Foreign Office, recounting discussion with U Thant, 3 December 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

67. Record of a Conversation between the Foreign Secretary, Gordon Walker, and Mr. Gromyko, the Foreign Minister of the USSR at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, 9 December 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/104, WO 32.

Stanleyville, ruling out any further political involvement of the organization in Congolese politics.⁶⁸ Thant emphasized that he already had special representatives in Léopoldville and Stanleyville but that they had been powerless to resolve the crisis. In addition, he did not see how “any further action by the United Nations at this stage could be effective.”⁶⁹ UN reluctance to get involved was also attributable to its own problems with the Congolese government. In November 1964, officials were dealing with an embarrassing incident in Stanleyville in which a group of mercenaries stole jeeps with the intention of using them to transport arms for use against the rebels. The head of the Opération de Nations Unies au Congo in Léopoldville, Bibiano Osorio-Tafall, had instructed his counterpart in Stanleyville to approach Colonel Leonard Mulamba, the highest-ranking ANC officer, and inform him that “unless the four UNations jeeps stolen by the mercenaries are returned I shall instruct all members of the UN mission in Stan to close the office and return to Léopoldville.”⁷⁰ He repeated these threats to Tshombe, warning him that the Congolese government was responsible for providing adequate security for the UN mission and personnel. Subsequently, Under-Secretary for Political Affairs Ralph J. Bunche publicly denied that Osorio-Tafall had issued the threat. Bunche said that Osorio-Tafall lacked the authority to extract the UN force and that any instructions for withdrawal would have to come from the office of the Secretary General. However, *The New York Times* published the story a month later, causing embarrassment for the UN because it enhanced the impression that the organization was powerless to stop rebel activities.⁷¹

The Stanleyville intervention not only damaged the relationship between the West and the African Group, the Afro-Asian bloc, and the UN but also further soured U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. In 1963 the superpowers had signed the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, marking a thaw in superpower relations after the tensions surrounding the Cuban missile crisis the previous year. However, the intervention in the Congo dashed hopes that Moscow would resume its financial contributions to the UN after having suspended payments in 1961 in protest against UN policy in Congo

68. Telegram, Foreign Office to Washington, proposing the idea of approaching U Thant, 30 November 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

69. Confidential Telegram, New York to the Foreign Office, Recounting Discussion with U Thant, 3 December 1964, in TNAUK, Records of the Office of the Prime Minister, PREM 13/16, WO 32.

70. Cable, Osorio-Tafall to Bunche, 8 January 1965, in UNA, S-0279, Box 3, File 20, Congo-Miscellaneous-Jeep Incident-Stanleyville, December 1964.

71. “Statement by Bunche,” *The New York Times*, 6 January 1965, in UNA, S-0279, Box 3, File 20, Congo-Miscellaneous-Jeep Incident-Stanleyville, December 1964.

following the assassination of Lumumba. Rather, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko openly condemned the intervention, which he branded as a neocolonialist action. In a meeting with Walker, Gromyko attributed the USSR's withholding of funds from the UN to the politics of the Congo operation, which Moscow had opposed from the beginning. He declared, "In no circumstances would the Soviet Government pay expenses incurred as a result of colonial policies."⁷² Walker denied that the intervention had been an effort to impose a military solution on Congo, and he sought to exploit the Sino-Soviet split by pointing out that the Chinese were "causing the most trouble of all." However, the mission had clearly damaged the UN, setting back negotiations with Moscow on the resumption of payments and serving to inflame Cold War tensions.

Furthermore, the Soviet bloc supported the African group and the Afro-Asian bloc as the debate about the intervention continued over seventeen meetings of the Security Council.⁷³ As the majority opinion rejected the humanitarian defense, fourteen African countries demanded the right to participate in the discussion (without the right to vote) during Security Council sessions to demonstrate the cohesion of the African group. Among them were some of the loudest critics of British and U.S. policy, including Algeria, Ghana, Guinea, Tanzania, Uganda, and the United Arab Republic. From 9 December onward, the debates took on a vitriolic tone. During one meeting, the Algerian representative denounced the "illegality" of the military action, which had been "aimed at repressing the insurrection of the Congolese people against a government which was merely an agent in the hands of the old colonial powers."⁷⁴ In such an atmosphere and with the Western powers having little diplomatic leverage to negotiate a more moderate resolution, the African and Asian states won the day. On 30 December, the Security Council legitimized their interpretation of events by roundly condemning the Stanleyville intervention. Although Resolution 199 stopped short of naming Britain, Belgium, and the United States, it "*deplor[ed]* the recent event" and called for the immediate removal of all mercenaries and for "all States to refrain or desist

72. Record of a Conversation between Walker and Gromyko, 9 December 1964. For more on the Chinese role in supporting the Stanleyville rebels and the effect of the Sino-Soviet split, see Namikas, *Battleground Africa*, pp. 194–196.

73. N. Fedorenko, Permanent Representative of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to the President of the Security Council, 25 November 1964, in UNA, S0279, Box 3, File 19, Congo-Stanleyville Incidents—Missionaries, November 1964.

74. Algerian representative speaking at UN SCOR, 1183rd Meeting, 22 December 1964, as quoted in Natolino Ronzitti, *Rescuing Nationals Abroad through Military Coercion and Intervention on Grounds of Humanity* (Amsterdam: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1985), p. 83.

from intervening in the domestic affairs of the Congo.⁷⁵ The vote was almost unanimous, with only France abstaining. Britain and the United States had little choice but to acquiesce and instructed their representatives at the last moment to support the resolution in an attempt to bring the episode to a close.

The final resolution mandated that the OAU extend its efforts to coordinate with the Congolese central government to bring about a ceasefire. By January 1965, support for the rebels was widespread. Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, and Milton Obote of Uganda met with and expressed support for Gbenye, enhancing the impression that the OAU would not act as a neutral arbiter between the rebels and the Léopoldville government.⁷⁶ However, the ad hoc committee that was set up in February 1965 included representatives from countries that had not openly condemned Tshombe, such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Cameroon. The committee's first act was to invite both the Congolese government and the rebels to a meeting in Nairobi to pursue national reconciliation. Amid the ongoing military campaign against the rebels by the ANC and the continuing violence perpetrated by Gbenye's followers, negotiations proved largely fruitless, and both sides rejected any possibility of a negotiated peace.⁷⁷ Hamstrung, the OAU could do little but encourage the Congolese government to organize national elections under their supervision and seek guarantees that the rebels would be given freedom of movement to participate. By August 1965, although the rebels had become even more

75. UN Security Council Resolution 199 [S/6129], 30 December 1964, in *Resolutions and Decisions of the Security Council 1964, Security Council, Official Records: Nineteenth Year* (New York: United Nations Printing Office, 1966), pp. 28–29 (emphasis in original), stipulated: “Requests all states to refrain or desist from intervening in the domestic affairs of the Congo; Appeals for a cease-fire in the Congo in accordance with the resolution of the Organization of African Unity dated 10 September 1964; Considers, in accordance with that same resolution, that the mercenaries should as a matter of urgency be withdrawn from the Congo; Encourages the Organization of African Unity to pursue its efforts to help the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to achieve national reconciliation in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution of the Organization of African Unity; Requests all states to assist the Organization of African Unity in the attainment of this objective; Requests the Organization of African Unity, in accordance with Article 54 of the Charter of the United Nations, to keep the Security Council fully informed of any action it may take under the present resolution; Requests the Secretary-General of the United Nations to follow the situation in the Congo and to report to the Security Council at the appropriate time.”

76. Sub-monthly Political Report from S. K. Kathpalia, Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of India, Léopoldville, to the Special Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 11 February 1965, in The National Archives of India, New Delhi (hereafter NAD), HI/1012(90)/65, 1965, Political Reports (other than annual) from Léopoldville.

77. Sub-monthly Political Report from S. K. Kathpalia, Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of India, Léopoldville, to the Special Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 16 March 1965, in NAD, HI/1012(90)/65, 1965, Political Reports (other than annual) from Léopoldville.

internally divided, the situation was largely unchanged, with continuing skirmishes between the rebels and the ANC and the northern Fizi territory wholly under rebel control. The March 1965 election produced a fragile coalition government referred to as the Congolese National Convention and led by Tshombe. However, internal government strife and the continued rebellion through the summer increased fears that the rebels would be able to mount a real challenge to the established Léopoldville political leadership.

With political paralysis in the capital, the head of the ANC, General Joseph Désire Mobutu (later Mobutu Sese Seko), seized the opportunity to fill the vacuum and took control of the country in a military coup on 25 November.⁷⁸ He immediately declared a five-year end to all political activity in Congo in an effort to consolidate power. Although Belgium and the United States immediately denied any involvement in the coup, Belgian politicians expressed “relief and satisfaction.”⁷⁹ The U.S. ambassador in Léopoldville, George McMurtrie Godley, advised the State Department, “We have a good chance of influencing Mobutu . . . we must set to work to influence and form policy in pro-Western . . . direction.”⁸⁰ In response, he was instructed to cooperate with Mobutu’s regime, with formal recognition forthcoming within a week.⁸¹ Although the United States tried to distance itself publicly from Mobutu, the coup was widely believed to have been orchestrated by the U.S. and Belgian political advisers in Léopoldville, backed by a strengthened ANC that included anti-Castro mercenaries from Cuba. Among others who rejected U.S. and Belgian denials of involvement, the Indian ambassador in Léopoldville relayed to Delhi that the U.S. government had “cultivated Mobutu assiduously . . . the facts . . . appear to be that the coup was pre-meditated and that the

78. For further detail on Mobutu’s coup, see Sean Kelly, *America’s Tyrant: The CIA and Mobutu of Zaire* (Washington, DC: American University Press, 1993); and Stephen R. Weissman, “CIA Covert Action in Zaire and Angola: Patterns and Consequences,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 94, No. 2 (1979), pp. 263–286.

79. Some argue that the overthrow of Lumumba in September 1960 was beneficial for U.S. business interests and that protecting foreign investments previously served as a motivation for undertaking regime change. See Arindrajit Dube, Ethan Kaplan, and Suresh Naidu, “Coups, Corporations and Classified Information,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 126, No. 3 (2011), pp. 1,375–1,409; and David N. Gibbs, *The Political Economy of Third World Intervention: Mines, Money and U.S. Policy in the Congo Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

80. Telegram, Godley to the Secretary of State, 27 November 1965, in NARA, RG59, Central Foreign Policy Files, Subject Numeric Files, State Department, Box 2736, POL 23-9, Rebellions, Coups the Congo.

81. Telegram, Department of State to the Embassy in the Congo, 26 November 1965, in *FRUS*, Vol. XXIII 1960–1968, Doc. 455.

foreign powers were more than aware of it. Its relative finesse, such as it is, argues some central and intelligent authority.”⁸²

Conclusion

Despite the muted language of UN Security Council Resolution 199, it was highly significant for the Afro-Asian bloc insofar as it was the first time they succeeded in using both moral and legal arguments to condemn Western policies in the Congo. Their success reflected deeper trends in UN politics, as the Afro-Asian bloc, with the cooperation of the African Group, sought to increase its influence, particularly on issues it deemed neocolonial. The resolution was also important because it brought to the surface the question of race relations that had up to that point lingered under the veneer of diplomatic civility that existed between African and Western politicians on the question of the Congo. The Security Council debates highlighted the hypocrisy of the humanitarian arguments repeatedly put forward by U.S., British, and Belgian representatives in defense of the intervention. Although almost 1,000 European lives were saved, tens of thousands of Congolese were massacred by the Congolese army and white mercenaries in retaliation for their perceived support of the rebels. The exact number remains unknown because, as the historian Ludo De Witte has pointed out, “no one bothered to count their bodies.”⁸³ So damaging were the reports and images of the streets of Stanleyville crowded with the bodies of dead Congolese that the validity of arguments about rescuing nationals abroad lost all legitimacy until the end of the Cold War ushered in a new debate about the responsibility of states to protect individuals from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity.⁸⁴

However, the debate about the “humanitarian” nature of the intervention did serve as a convenient straw man for the African Group and the U.S., Belgian, and British coalition. For the African countries, their outrage at the violation of Congolese sovereignty by the paratroopers and the atrocities committed by the white mercenaries in the service of the Congolese government

82. Sub-monthly Political Report from V. Siddharthachary, Ambassador, Embassy of India, Léopoldville, to the Special Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, 2 December 1965, in NAD, HI/1012(90)/65, 1965, Political Reports (other than annual) from Léopoldville.

83. De Witte, “The Suppression of the Congo Rebellions,” p. 14.

84. International Commission on State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001), pp. 12, 91.

has to be measured against the violence and very real threats the rebels posed to the hostages. Their genuine indignation created a basis for a public attack on imperialism and neocolonialism that allowed the issue of race—which prior to that point in international politics regarding Africa had been limited to the issue of apartheid in South Africa and the question of the status of southwest Africa—to become a larger part of the discourse of relations between the West and Africa. In framing the debate this way, African representatives created unity—if only short-lived—within the African Group leading to the first legal condemnation of Western actions at the UN. For many African states, the Stanleyville debate exposed the limits of sovereignty and the difficulties of maintaining sovereign integrity in the context of civil war. Moreover, the success of African states in getting the resolution passed on their own terms underscored how they considered the problems of the Congo as a vehicle they could use both to assert their individual national objectives and to promote a common African cause in international affairs.

For Belgium, Britain, and the United States, the episode exposed the hollowness of their Cold War policies in Africa. The underlying Cold War imperative shaped the Western governments' understanding of the conflict. The perceived Communist leanings of the rebels, coupled with the threats to white hostages, served as a vague basis for the violent suppression of an internal Congolese revolution. There is no evidence that, as ANC forces closed in on Stanleyville, the Western powers considered withdrawing their support for the mercenaries. During the UN debates that followed, the U.S., Belgian, and British envoys still cited humanitarian justifications, glossing over the mass killing of Congolese by the very same proxy actors the United States, Britain, and Belgium had supplied. This glaring hypocrisy was indicative of the racial lens inherent in Cold War politics in Africa and the extent to which the United States, Belgium, and Britain viewed the Congo as a space that was essential to *their* interests rather than those of the Congolese people. The Belgian, British, and U.S. governments were willing to violate sovereignty when their interests were threatened. Furthermore, in a cynical move, they attempted to cast the Stanleyville episode as a problem that had resulted from a lack of African unity. This was part of a broader effort to thwart the influence of the African Group at the United Nations, where it had mounted an anti-imperialist crusade since 1958. The long-term effects on relations with African states were significant. Many of those countries interpreted the episode as reflective of the hegemonic policies of the West and the ill-defined nature of sovereignty and laws regarding the use of force in Africa.

Whether the rebellions that besieged the Congo from 1963 onward would have eventually succeeded in breaking the country apart remains

questionable. Although the advent of Mobutu's dictatorship was welcomed by many as a stabilizing force for the Congo, the insidious nature of his entry into power foreshadowed a long period of authoritarian rule. However, even before he came to power and extended the ANC campaign against the rebels, each of the movements had already been weakened and in some cases splintered by internal division. Arguably, the neocolonial overtones of the intervention, coupled with the massacre of thousands of Congolese, served to transform what was an attempt at political revolution into a conflict that at the local level reflected class dynamics and social unrest and at the international level reflected the interaction of the Cold War with race relations between the West and Africa. This defines the Stanleyville episode as distinct from both the overt Cold War and the decolonization frameworks that have thus far been applied to the first Congo crisis in the early 1960s. The Stanleyville intervention had unique features that cannot be explained by the analytical framework of Communism versus imperialism that has so often been invoked. Rather, the importance of this understudied disaster in the Congo is suggested by the combination of the intervention itself and the ways it was subsequently framed by the parties involved. The Simba rebellion was a watershed moment because it revealed that internal and external threats to sovereignty were bound up with the racial dimension of Cold War politics in Africa. In addition, the episode highlighted to African actors that although the principle of sovereignty may have been universal, it was not universally construed.